

S E R M O N S

P R E A C H E D O N

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

A T T H E

CATHEDRAL in NORWICH,

And at the PARISH CHURCHES of

ST. PETER's, MANCROFT,

A N D

ST. JOHN's, MADDERMARKEET,

In the said CITY.

By the late REVEREND

JOHN FRANCIS, LL. D.

Minister of the said Parishes, and Rector of
MORLEY, in NORFOLK.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. II.

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MDCCLXXIII.

SEVERAL

OF

SEVERAL OCCASIONS

AT THE

CATHEDRAL IN NORWICH

And at the Parish Church of

ST. PETER'S MANCROFT

AND

JOHN, MANCROFT MARKET

IN THE CITY



JOHN FRANKLIN

Minister of the Parish of

MORLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

Published from the Author's Manuscript, by his Son
JOHN FRANKLIN, M.A. Vicar of Lakenham,
Hants, near Basingstoke, and Author of 'The
Life of King David.'

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THE
CONTENTS
OF THE
SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON IX.

ON Christ being touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities.

For we have not an High-Priest, which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find
Grace

The CONTENTS.

Grace to help in Time of Need. Hebrews
iv. 15, 16. Page 13

SERMON X.

Differences in Opinion ought not to make
a Breach in Christian Charity.

*Sirs, ye are Brethren; why do ye wrong one
to another.* Acts vii. 26. P. 41

SERMON XI.

War the most dreadful Judgment God
can inflict upon a Nation.

*O thou Sword of the Lord, How long will it
be, e'er thou be quiet? Put up thyself,
into thy Scabbard; rest and be still. How
can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath gi-
ven it a Charge against Ashkelon, and
against*

THE CONTENTS.

against the Sea-shore? There hath he appointed it. Jeremiah xlvii. 6, 7. P 72

SERMON XII.

Conscience, the Voice of God within us,
to direct and govern our Actions.

He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good!

Micah vi. 8.

P. 104

SERMON XIII.

The Ministers of Christ are the Ambassadors for Christ.

Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; We pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians, v. 20.

P. 133

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XIV.

The Scorners incapable of true Wisdom.

A Scorners seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not.

But Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth. Proverbs xiv. 6. P. 160

SERMON XV.

On Abraham's offering up his Son Isaac.

By Faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the Promises, offered up his only-begotten Son: Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy Seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead; from whence also he had received him in a Figure. Hebrews xi.

17, 18, 19.

P. 189

S E R-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XVI.

The great Wisdom of moderating our
Passions.

*He that is slow to Anger, is better than the
Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit,
than he that taketh a City. Proverbs
xvi. 32.*

P. 225

SER-

The CONTENTS
SERMON XVI

The Great Willingness of men to
Follow.

He that is born to a King
is not to be despised
in the eyes of the
people, and he that
is born to a poor
man is not to be
despised in the eyes
of the people.

S. R.

S E R M O N S

P R E A C H E D O N

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

S E R M O N IX.

On Christ being touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities.

P R E A C H E D A T

St. PETER'S, MANCROFT, in NORWICH,
On *Easter-Day*, March 26, 1749.

Hebrews iv. 15, 16.

For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.

AMONGST the many Peculiarities to be observed in the Writings of St. Paul, by every attentive
VOL. II. B Reader,

Reader, this may be taken Notice of as One ; that he often answers Objections, without any Change in the Scheme of his Language, that might intimate any such to be made or occurring. We have here an Instance of this Kind, but not sufficient of itself without other Arguments, to prove this Address to the *Hebrews* to be his. Whosoever it was, the blessed Author of it seems, in the Words of my 'Text, to obviate an Objection, which might possibly arise from what he had said immediately before. He had been telling the *Hebrew Converts*, *that we have now a great High Priest ; not*, as he adds in the next Chapter, *like those taken from among Men*, who had Occasion to offer Gifts and Sacrifices, as well for their own as for the Sins of others ; but *being perfect* himself, expiated the Sins of
of

of all Mankind *by the Sacrifice of himself*. This great Being, says he, was *Jesus, the Son of God, who is now passed into the Heavens*.

Hence then it was that *Jews*, lately become Christians, might have some uneasy Thoughts in their Minds. They had long been used to have an High Priest like unto themselves always present with them. To whom, under any Doubts and Difficulties they could have Recourse to, and consult with : *Who could have Compassion on the Ignorant, and on them that were out of the Way* : Who would kindly instruct the Former, and patiently bear with, and gently endeavour to bring back, the wandering Sheep, as being a Man himself, and as such compassed with the Infirmities of human Nature. But what were they now to do. Their new High

Priest was no sooner risen from the Dead, but he quickly departed from them; was ascended into the Heavens, and proved to be no less than the eternal Son of God. And whilst he thus enjoyed consummate Glory in Heaven, could it be imagined, that he would now trouble himself any further with the Affairs of this lower World, and much less with Creatures, by some of whom he had been so ungratefully and cruelly used, and from scarce any met with that Affection and pious Regard which he might reasonably have expected? And therefore we may suppose them thus replying to the Apostle: You exhort us to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*; but, Can we help being staggered at this? You tell us, that our *High Priest is passed into the Heavens*, too far for us to follow him;

him; to a Place too holy and sacred for such polluted Creatures as we, to approach to even in Thought. The inspired Penman thus proceeds to comfort them: Let not what I have said dishearten or make you at all uneasy. For call to mind the Divinity of the Being you are now under; not circumscribed by Time or Place: Though shining in transcendant Glory in Heaven, yet never absent from those who call upon him in Faith and Piety here upon Earth: And what is more, *He is not an High Priest which cannot be touched or affected with the Feeling of our Infirmities; for he was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.* No Kind of Suffering was there which he did not submit to, and consequently none that he will not have a Fellow-Feeling for. He moreover is invested with *all Power both*

in Heaven and Earth, not weak and limited, like *Aaron* and his Successors. Well, therefore, may you now take Courage, and with a pious Confidence and Trust in Him, approach the Throne of Grace, to help in Time of Need, who is able to support you under the severest Trials, or else free you from them. A most comfortable Doctrine and Assurance this ! In this Vale of Misery and Tears, wherein no Station in Life is exempt from Trouble or Disquietude : From the Sceptre to the Spade ; from the Cradle to the Grave ; all have their Share of Pain and Uneasiness. Our blessed Saviour endured the most severe and grievous, setting us therein an Example of Patience and Submission in each to the divine Will, and is pleased to represent himself to us, as, when on Earth, having now a
Feeling

Feeling of our Infirmities; as sympathizing with us in all our Troubles and Afflictions. But in this, as in all other Expressions of the like Nature, by, or of the supreme Being, which we meet with in the sacred Writings, we are not to suppose that the sacred Majesty of Heaven is really so affected, any more than that he has a Head, Tongue, Hands or Feet, or any other Part like us, which are ascribed to him in those heavenly Pages, in compliance with our Capacities and Conceptions; but only that our blessed Saviour will deal with us, and we shall find ourselves affected, supported and protected, as if he was really touched with what happens to us, and visibly interposed in our Favour.

Let us then, now we have been invited to attend our blessed Lord at his

B 4

Table,

Table, and to commemorate his Death and Passion, even upon this blessed and glorious Day, when we joyfully commemorate his Resurrection, his Victory over Sin and Death, let us, I say, now call to Mind, reflect upon and consider what he suffered for us. For by that Means we shall see how much we are obliged to Him; what Blessings we derive from Him; to what a glorious State we are raised with Him. And in this Meditation, Who can look upon his whole Life, from the Manger to the Cross, but as one continued Suffering? His very assuming our Nature! What was it, but an amazing Condescension and Abasement? That the Worlds great Maker; the Heir of all Things; who was *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, should divest himself of celestial

tial Majesty, and shroud his Glory in our Nature, and appear in the Likeness of Man; Could there be a greater Descent? No less a Fall was it than from Heaven to Earth. When we see a Person of our own Nature reduced from an high Station, and affluent Circumstances in Life, How do we lament his Condition, and think the Change scarce possible to be borne? Yet as little Comparifon is there between this and that of our blessed Redeemer, as there is between the Glories of Heaven, and what we call the good Things of this World. And yet He submitted to the Change, to whom it would have been a great Condescension and Degradation, if he had even taken upon himself the Nature of the highest Order of Angels. For as they were all his own Creatures, the Work of his own Hands, infinite

was, and must ever be, the Distance between Him and them. This Consideration may, perhaps, make us suspect, that the Changes among us from Prosperity to Adversity may appear little in his Sight, whose own Descent or Degradation from God to Man, was so much greater. Sure, I am, it ought to be so in ours; and we should think so too, if we did but reflect with ourselves what a little it is we deserve. But as our Lord took upon him our entire Nature, he had a Feeling of the Change like as we have; he knows thereby how we are affected; he sees how hardly we bear the Losses and Misfortunes we meet with, and how difficult it is for human Nature to support itself, when it be reduced on a Sudden from the Place of Riches and Honour, to the lowest Step of Poverty and Disgrace. If, therefore,

we

we look up to Him in the Day of our Distress, when encompassed with the Clouds of Misfortune, and we are near being overwhelmed by the Waves of Adversity, he will dispel the gloomy Thoughts which then are but too apt to possess us, and putting us in Mind to what a low Estate he voluntary reduced himself from the highest, exalt our Thoughts from Earth to Heaven, and setting the Joys of that blessed Place before us, make us join with holy *Job*, in declaring, *that the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

Next to the Loss of all we have, is the Loss of our good Name and Reputation; a Loss which bears as hard or harder upon human Nature than any, especially upon ingenuous and honest

B 6

Minds,

Minds, who know the Value thereof, and truly esteem and sincerely follow those Ways of Virtue and Goodness, upon which alone it can be well and justly grounded. Strange is it to relate; yet the Loss of this, the blessed Jesus, who was Virtue and Goodness itself, sustained. What a melancholy Idea does it give us of the Blindness and Baseness of human Nature, that he, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth; who went about doing Good* to all that wanted his Assistance, and testified upon every Occasion a most disinterested Love and Affection for all Mankind, should be traduced and vilified; called by the opprobrious Names of a *gluttonous Man, and a Wine Bibber; a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*: Nay, represented as a Magician and Impostor; as one that aimed at the Crown, and a
Sower

Sower of Sedition amongst the People, though he most industriously avoided any Thing like it; though all he taught was for the Improvement; all he did, for the Benefit and Comfort of all he conversed with. Thus did God suffer his own beloved Son to be treated; and that without repining, or returning any Language like that which he received: But, to shew that he was not insensible of the Injury they did him, he mildly expostulates the Case with them; and endeavours to convince them of what Folly, as well as Malice, they were guilty in their Censures of him, in a Way, which must, if they had any Ingenuity in them, have filled them with Shame and Concern. By which Conduct of his we are at once taught, how we should behave upon the like Usage; and are at the same Time assured, that our
Lord

Lord sees how grievous it is to us, by his own Experience, and that he will take Care our Characters shall be cleared from all Slander and Calumny, either here or hereafter, to the Shame and Confusion of all our Enemies.

Again, to be taken from our Friends, from those with whom we have long lived in perfect Union and strong Affection, is very grievous. This, our blessed Lord submitted to. The sacred Text says, *he was withdrawn from his Disciples.* The original Word, *Apespastes*, signifies the being forced away by Violence; to express the Reluctance with which he left them; the great Grief and Concern it gave him; as his Returning again did the longing Desire he had to continue with them. His being forced away the second Time augmented

mented his Agony. His heavenly Father calls him secretly to an Account for the Sins of the whole World, which he had undertaken to expiate. To Judgment he is summoned by him, to be talked by him in his Anger. No Wonder then his Sweat was, as it were, great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground. He returns, however, victorious; yet finding them still asleep the third Time, his Expression, as it should be translated, denotes some Surprise at finding them so; *ye sleep on still, and take your Rest*; testifying how little they were affected to what he was: Pausing then awhile, he says, *behold the Hour is come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the Hands of Sinners: Arise, we now enter upon Action: Lo, he that betrayeth me is at Hand*. Every Step of this great Transaction is worthy our Meditation
and

and Regard ; at the Approach of which he is said to be sore amazed, and almost quite dispirited and dejected.

Another Thing there is which Man, of himself, knows not how to bear with any Patience, and that is Scorn and Derision. It is the Language of Contempt. It beats a Man out of his last Intrenchments, his Opinion of himself. It makes him look Mean even in his own Eyes ; it sinks his Spirits, and overwhelms him with Confusion of Thoughts, and Dejection of Mind. Even this the Lord of Glory, and Saviour of the World met with. He was had in Derision of them that were round about him ; was the Object of their Scorn and Contempt ; beheld a Murderer preferred before him ; with Mockery had the Ensigns of Royalty put upon him, and his Enemies *contemp-
tuously*

tuously bowed the Knee to him, saying Hail, King of the Jews. As Man, he felt the Bitterness of their Tauntings and Jeerings, and thereby knows what his Servants suffer under the like Usage; will support their Minds with a Consciousness of his Approbation of them, and finally make them triumph in their Turn. Then shall the righteous Man stand in great Boldness, before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no Account of his Labours. When those who despised him shall see it, they shall be troubled with terrible Fear, and shall be amazed at the Strangeness of his Salvation, the glorious State he shall be exalted to, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for Anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in Derision, and

and a Proverb of Reproach. We Fools accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour. How is he numbered among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints.

All bodily Pain and Torture he endured to the utmost. *The Plow*ers *plowed upon his Back, and made long Furrows.* His Flesh was torn with Scourges, and his Temples harrowed with Thorns; his Hands and Feet were nailed to the accursed Tree; the stretching of his Nerves and Sinews were attended with the sharpest Pain and Anguish, and that for six long Hours, enduring, each Moment of them, beyond the Pangs of an ordinary Death; to shew us that he is not insensible of what we suffer, under the most grievous Pains

Pains and Torments we may be exercised with.

But what is to be done, when we be under that Dejection of Mind, as to imagine our God is departed from us? As to the Evils and Misfortunes of Life, the Losses and Disgraces we may meet with, or even the greatest bodily Pains and Torments; these, we know, by religious Reflections, and a steady Frame of Mind, may be endured and supported. But when the Mind itself be touched, and no Sense of the divine Presence remaining, this surely must be very deplorable, and nothing but Despair the Consequence. For, although *our Spirits may sustain their Infirmities*; may bear up under the Evils and Calamities of Life, yet, *a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Who can support himself under the
Thought

Thought of being deserted by his God ? That nothing might be wanting to our Ease and Consolation under this worse State, we have our Saviour even herein for our Example. What is scarce to be imagined, the Son of God himself was reduced to this very Extremity, when he cried, *My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me ?* This was the last, the bitterest Conflict he had. *On him were laid the Iniquities of us all.* He well saw all the Evil and heinous Guilt of the Sins for which he suffered ; all the Offence against the Majesty, and Ingratitude against the Goodness of God, which was contained in all those Sins : Too justly, therefore, might he imagine as Man, that God should turn away his Eyes from a Scene so offensive to a Being of perfect Purity and Excellency, as the Transgressions and Vileness of all Mankind brought

brought together in one View must be. And yet from this did our Blessed Saviour recover himself, when he was enabled to say, *all is finished*; the Wrath of God is appeased; divine Justice is satisfied; the Salvation of Mankind is accomplished.

Thus was our *great High Priest* tempted or tried, like as we are, only without Sin. Of Sin likewise it is, which we should do our utmost Endeavour to cleanse ourselves; and then, of what Kind soever our Infirmities and Calamities may be, he will have a Feeling of them; and either deliver us from them, or else render them supportable to us; so that we shall join the *Holy Psalmist*, in declaring, *that it was good for us, that we have been afflicted*. Even with that greatest Trial of our Blessed Saviour,

Saviour, the best of Men have sometimes been exercised. The Man after God's own Heart was not exempted. O God, says he, *thou didst hide thy Face from me, and I was troubled; I said, I am cast out of the Sight of thine Eyes.* But yet this Trouble, sharp and sensible as it was, did not sink him down in Despair. His Remedy was Prayer: *Then cried I unto thee, O God, and gat me to my Lord right humbly.* And what was the Event of his thus making his Supplication before him? He himself shall inform us. *The Lord heard me, and had Mercy on me. Thou hast turned,* says he, *my Mourning into Dancing; thou hast put off my Sackcloth, and girded me with Gladness.* God sometimes, indeed, keeps back, for a while, this Blessing from us; lest if it succeeded immediately, we should think it of our own Growth, and not his

his Gift. As he is obliged to leave us combating for a Time with other Difficulties, lest if we should always enjoy the Sunshine of Prosperity, we should ascribe it to our own Wisdom and Prudence, our own Power and Goodness, and forget God the Author of it. But we must not, therefore, be discouraged at this Delay ; but with pious Confidence and humble Importunity, press still forward to the Throne of Grace ; being well assured, that by the Mediation and Intercession of our High Priest, the blessed Jesus, who knoweth, and hath a Feeling of our Necessities and Infirmities, we shall *obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.*

In the Course of what has been delivered upon this Subject, we must have observed two or three Things, which
ought

bought to be particularly considered by us. The one is, that as many of the Evils and Calamities of Life, (to Patience under which we have been exhorted from the Examples of our blessed Saviour) arise from the Malice and Contrivance of wicked Men, we should be particularly careful, that we ourselves never be the Authors of any such to our Fellow-Creatures. For with what Face can we apply to the Almighty for his Grace and Assistance, if we ourselves shall be found to resemble them of whom we complain. Little will our High Priest be affected *with the Feeling of our Infirmities*; little will our Applications to God for Redress under Violence and Oppression avail us, if we injure or oppress our Neighbour. Our Complaint of Suffering by the Tongue of Infamy and Slander, will

will meet with a very unfavourable Ear at the Throne of Grace, if we, ourselves, appear to be Slanderers and Defamers of others. In these Circumstances the Return of our Prayers will rather be Vengeance on ourselves, than on those we beg to be delivered from.

Another Particular I hinted at, as worthy our especial Consideration and Regard, from this Discourse, is, that though, perhaps, we may not be conscious to ourselves of Guilt as to those Evils we may happen to labour under; yet it behoves us to reflect upon those Sins we are guilty of. It is no unusual Thing with the Almighty to punish one Sin with a Calamity of a different Nature. Little Affinity was there between Famine, and the being treated as Spies of *Egypt*, and the unnatural Usage

Joseph had met with from his Brethren. And yet the Distress they were then in, brought to their Remembrance their past Cruelty to him. *We are verily guilty, say they, concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul, when he besought us, and we would not bear, therefore is this Distress come upon us.* They considered this, though of a different Nature, as a Punishment for their former Sin. Though, perhaps, they might observe some Resemblance between their finding no Regard to their Intreaties and Remonstrances, and their own Turning heretofore a deaf Ear to his Prayers. But, however, unless by Repentance and Reformation we entitle ourselves to the Merits of our Redeemer, and have thereby all our Sins propitiated and blotted out, we shall in vain implore his Mercy and Assistance.

sistance. We must approve ourselves in his Sight by Piety and Virtue, if we desire or expect his Favour and Help in the Day of our Calamity.

From this wonderful Example, finally, we must be greatly confirmed in the Faith of Christ, since of all the Instances we meet with in History of suffering Innocence, we find none like this, *Never was there Sorrow like unto his Sorrow.* Many have suffered or undergone Evils such as some of those he went through, but none who endured them all. *Let us then hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering;* and that our Sincerity therein may appear unto all Men, and be approved in God's Sight; let us evidence and shew it forth by our good Works; and let it be our future Care and Study so to behave ourselves

40 S E R M O N IX.

upon every Occasion, in every Station and Circumstance of Life, that God may have Pleasure in us, and be before Men glorified by us; that we may so shine forth in his Sight by our pious and virtuous Practice, that he may delight in us for good, dispel all Evils from us, and keep us ever under his Protection and Guidance, for the Sake of our great High Priest, the blessed Jesus, our only Saviour and Redeemer; to whom be all Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R

S E R M O N X.

Differences in Opinion ought not to
make a Breach in christian Charity.

Preached at the Cathedral, at *Norwich*,

On *Sunday, May the 5th, 1745.*

ACTS vii. 26. — *Part.*

*Sirs, ye are Brethren; Why do ye Wrong
one to another?*

THERE is something particularly
affecting in the very Words of
my Text. They contain an Expostula-
tion which the Mind assents to so rea-
dily, that, without the least Hesitation,
we all immediately agree, that it is very
unbecoming Brethren to do Wrong one

to another. Even *Moses*, we find, who is a Man recorded as remarkable for his Meekness, could not see one of the *Hebrews*, his Countrymen, smite his Fellow, without being greatly moved, and expressing his Concern, saying, *Sirs, ye are Brethren; Why do ye Wrong one to another?* The *Egyptians* were their common Enemies and Oppressors, and surely they should rather have joined in endeavouring to shake off the Yoke they groaned under, or make it more tolerable to themselves, than add to the Bitterness of their Affliction, by their unkind Treatment of one another. And common Prudence, one would think, should make us, upon all Occasions, shew forth a kind and tender Regard toward such, as we are tied to by that affectionate Relation of Brethren. It is sufficient surely, to have those to
guard

guard ourselves against, who are our declared Enemies, whom no Obligations, nor the kindest Treatment can avert from their Designs against us, and whom nothing can satisfy, but our Ruin and Destruction; such, I mean, as either endeavour to undermine and overthrow our Religion, and cast us back into the dark, uncomfortable State of Nature, or who have corrupted our Religion in such a Manner, that little of its genuine Beauty and Force is to be discovered amongst them, and they would fain bring us again under that Yoke, *which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.*

It is to some of these that our Differences and Dissensions amongst ourselves have been owing. And herein, indeed, as *Children of this World* they

have acted wisely: For nothing is found to weaken any Community or Body of Men, so much as causing Divisions among them. It is our Part to prevent their ill Effects by all the prudent Methods in our Power. It were well if we would but seriously consider the Particulars in which we differ: Whether they be of Moment sufficient to cause Schism amongst us, much less to break that Love and Charity, which, as Christians we owe to one another. There has been more than once, a very strong Disposition and Desire in our Church, to satisfy the Scruples of honest and well meaning Men; but when those very Men have seen greater Evils ready to arise from complying with them, they have wisely and conscientiously desisted from their Application, and rather chuse to
submit

submit to some Inconveniences, and acquiesce in some Things they did not so well like and approve of, than run the Hazard of hurting the Protestant Cause in general. The Things which they wished they could have had reformed, were agreed on all Sides to be of an indifferent Nature in themselves, and therefore they could not think it right to disturb the Peace of the Church about them; and that they are esteemed so now, appears plainly from the most considerable Men amongst those who dissent from us, frequenting our Places of public Worship, and occasionally joining in our Communion, and *in breaking of Bread and in Prayers*. For if they imagined we had any Thing sinful in our Service, Charity obligeth us to have that Opinion of their Regard to Truth,

and the Presence of God, that they would not, upon any Account, deliberately join in it; and that the Members of our Church retain a christian and brotherly Affection for them, appears from their frequently choosing them into the highest Offices of Power and Trust amongst us. That ever Men should be all of one Mind, it is perhaps as vain to expect as that they should be all of the same Complexion and Stature: And this Variety may be as necessary in the moral World, as the other is in the Natural; it serves to many great and noble Purposes. It keeps the Minds of Men in perpetual Exercise, which would otherwise loose a great Deal of their Force and Power. As the Winds prevent the Air and Water from stagnating, so do differences in Opinion rouse the Spirits,
which

which would otherwise remain lazy and unactive, and give Rise, by thus setting the Faculties of the Soul at work, to many useful and valuable Productions. What it is incumbent upon us to do, is in all these Cases, to preserve a Temper and Moderation, lest falling out amongst ourselves, we give the common Enemy an Advantage over us.

In the Begining of the Reformation, there were the same unhappy Differences amongst some of our first Reformers, which have since risen up again amongst us : In the Contentions of those two eminent Bishops and Martyrs, *Ridley*, Bishop of *London*, and *Hooper*, Bishop of *Gloucester*, there were two Nations as it were, struggling in the Womb, the two great Parties of the

Conformists and *Non-Conformists*. For those two Persons differed about the self same Matters, as we do now, the established Ceremonies, the Dress of Religion, certain By-Matters and Circumstances of Religion, which *Hooper*, the *Non-Conformist*, could not comply with, and *Ridley* the *Conformist*, insisted upon, and would not give up. So that in their old Differences, we find exactly our present Distempers: And therefore in their Cure, why may not we also find our own Remedy? It is a Remedy approved; it cured Men who thought one another superstitious and imposing on one Side, and stubborn and intollerably wilful on the other; and yet they came afterwards to believe one another to be, what they really were, upright Men on both Sides. Upon examining the Works
of

of each other, they found that they thoroughly agreed in those Things which are the Grounds and substantial Parts of our Religion.

And surely the Substance of Religion which we all hold, ought in Reason to have more Power to unite us, than all the By-Matters and Circumstances in the World to divide us. We have all but one Rule of Faith and Life, one Standard of religious Worship and Practice, which is one and the same Bible, and that translated into our Mother Tongue. And why then should we not be of one Heart and one Soul? We all believe that there is but *one God* in Opposition to Polytheism. We believe that this God is *to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth*, in Contradiction to Idolatry, without

without absurdly changing the Glory of the incorruptible God into the Similitude of a corruptible Man, or worshipping our Redeemer in Form of Bread. We all believe in the sacred Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose Names we were baptized. We are all taught of God, to hope for everlasting Happiness, through the Merits of our only Saviour, Mediator and Advocate, *Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the Author of eternal Salvation to all those who obey him.* We are all assured, by many infallible Proofs, that he is risen from the Dead, is ascended into Heaven, there to prepare a Place for all his true Disciples and Followers; and that the Heavens shall contain him, till the Retitution of all Things. And that, therefore, he is not in any Tabernacles

or

or Boxes here below. We all know, assuredly, *that in every Nation, he, and he only, who feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him:* And that the Church of God is not now limited or confined to the *Jewish* or any other Nation, but is truly Catholic and Universal.

We all believe the two future States of Heaven and Hell, for the Just and for the Unjust. And neither our Bibles nor we know of any other; nor indeed of any other Sorts of Men. Nor do any of us believe one Word concerning the Profitableness of praying or singing for departed Souls. In a Word, since we are so unanimous in these and many other the most important Truths; Shall we fall out about Ceremonies, about Postures and Gestures, about dignifying

nifying and distinguishing Titles ; about Modes and Garments, about Things which are very far from the Heart, and many Removes from the Essence of Religion? Nay, Things which are Shadows and meer Nothings, when compared with those substantial Matters, wherein we are all agreed. Nay, further, I may venture to say, we are all agreed even in these inferior Matters of Differences, though, perhaps, we are not aware of it. Thus, for Instance, we are all agreed, that kneeling at the Sacrament is no Part of our Saviour's Institution ; that kneeling at the most solemn Prayer that can be, is a fitting Posture ; that kneeling to the Sacrament, in Imitation of, or Compliance with, the Popish Worship of the Host, is absolutely unlawful: And yet we differ, and will not hear one another

out, nor understand one another's Meaning; but fight in the Dark, when we be all Friends, and all of a Side. In short, all the Difference that is between *English* Protestants, is occasioned by little Mistakes and Misapprehensions about very little Matters; and still they are so much of one Mind even as to the Matters in Difference, that if the *Conformists* thought the Ceremonies Popish, they would immediately turn *Non-Conformists*; and if the *Non-Conformists* did not apprehend them to be Popish, they would never have scrupled them. We may see of what Moment our joining against the common Enemy is, by the Pains the *Papists* took to widen the Breach between us.

In the Beginning of the Reformation, when the *Protestants* in foreign
Parts,

Parts, were inclined to join with the Church of *England*, and to have Bishops, and an ecclesiastical Polity as we have, and to unite together under King *Edward* the Sixth, whom they designed to choose for their Defender; the *Papists*, dreading the Consequences of such an Union, sent two of their Emissaries from *Rotterdam* into *England*, who were to pretend themselves *Anabaptists*, and preach against baptizing Infants, and preach up Re-baptizing, and a fifth Monarchy upon Earth. And such has been their Method of Proceeding ever since; and then charge us with the Heresies and Schisms they themselves have caused, and endeavour to bring a Discredit upon the Best of our Reformers, by the Company they sent among them. For they well knew what fatal Effects Dissention might produce; but when they

they have the Upper-hand, we find both Sides are treated in the same Manner by them. *Hooper* the *Non-Conformist*, and *Ridley* the *Conformist*, were both condemned to the Flames by them. So that however they were, in one Part of their Lives, yet, in their Deaths, the *Papists* took Care they should not be divided. The Members of the Church of *Rome* have, indeed, their Difference among them as well as we; but they all join for extirpating the pestilent northern Heresy, as they call it, and they all march steadily to the same End. And shall we not all then unite, in our utmost Endeavours, to support the true Faith which they call Heresy? Shall not we be as ready to give one another the Right-Hand of Fellowship, and to join Hands together in Jesus Christ, and for him, when we see how unanimous they are.

are in banding together against him? This is the common Concern of us all. For every Man has a Soul to be saved, one as well as another; every Man has an equal Share in the Holy Scriptures; every Man's Stake is the same, and they have a like Interest in their Religion. And, therefore, all the *Protestants* of *England* ought to be as one Man, in the Maintenance and Support of their Religion: And every single Man in his several Capacity, and according to his Power, ought to be as zealous for it, as if he alone were to support it; and he should say to our Saviour, and hold to that Saying, *though all Men forsake thee, yet will not I*. By this Means, under God, we shall preserve our Religion, and transmit it to our Posterity, at a far cheaper Rate than *Ridley* and *Hooper*, and the Rest of the blessed Martyrs

Martyrs conveyed it down to us. By these Means, we shall be freed from those Divisions which have been purposely caused amongst us, to hinder us from exercising the Power of Godliness; both in reforming our own Lives, and in putting a Stop to that Deluge of Impiety, which has been let into the Nation, in Order to make Way for Popery. And we shall have an Opportunity to employ our united Endeavours in promoting the Gospel, to the high Honour of God, to the edifying of his Church, and to the Salvation of our Souls. I have mentioned that Impiety which reigns amongst us, as brought in by our Enemies, in order to make Way for Popery. I am not singular in this Opinion; many great and wise Men have considered it in this Light, as having a natural Tendency to that Purpose.

Purpose. For, after Men have given up Revelation, and followed their own vain Fancies, they will quickly be bewildered; and after they have run themselves out of Breath, and can center no where, they will be at last glad of any Hold where they think they can find it, and rather than be always wandering, they will take up with an infallible Guide. So, that, whether the *Papists* be at the Bottom of this Evil or not, and sowing these Tares amongst us to that Purpose, it is much to be feared, there are too many of us, who are doing their Work for them, and by our own impious and chimerical Notions, making a Way, at last, for a blind Faith, and an implicit Obedience. For, if we of the reformed Churches be found to indulge ourselves in impious and licentious Discourses, calling in
Question,

Question, and ridiculing the most fundamental Articles of our Religion, Shall not we, ourselves, fall into Disrepute, and our pretended Reformation be reckoned nothing but a breaking loose from the Restraints of all Religion, and the Members of the Church of *Rome* be esteemed as the only Guardians of our most holy Faith?

This, those of us, would do well to consider, who, in public Companies propose Objections, though, perhaps, with no other Intent, than to have the Truth fairly discussed, and evidently displayed. All Persons are not adequate Judges of such Matters; and a plausible Objection shall make so strong an Impression, upon a weak and vain Mind, as the clearest Reason shall not be able afterwards to efface and clear away:

away: And he who proposed the Objection, shall be looked upon as the Patron of it too, by him who does not see the Force of the Solution; and having consequently an high Opinion of his Judgment, will not be able to get rid of the Error he has thus once imbibed. And then it requires no great Sagacity to see what must be the Event: For when those amongst us, who have the highest Characters for Sense and Judgment, are once represented as holding Opinions directly opposite to, and inconsistent with the fundamental Articles of our Religion, the general Cause of *Protestanism* must greatly suffer by it, and the *Papists* gain Credit to their Calumnies against us. Men will begin to think they have good Reason, indeed, to exclude their Lay-Members the Use of the Holy Scriptures,

Scriptures, when they see them turned to so bad Purposes; and when they be once wrested from them, they will become an easy Prey to all their Delusions. For when the *Sword of the Spirit* shall be once taken from them, What shall they have to defend themselves against all their Attacks? The Authority of the Word of God will be still pretended for any Doctrine they shall have a Mind to obtrude^{ed} upon them; and when they must not have Recourse to the Scriptures themselves, in Order to see, *whether those Things be so* or not, a blind implicit Faith and Obedience must be the Consequence. And when once the Bulk of Mankind shall be thus deluded, and the great Patrons of Reason find themselves outnumbered and overpowered, they will be glad to restore the Scriptures again

to their former Authority ; but finding it then in vain to call back the deluded Members to that Rule of their Faith, they will be forced to set down, and lament and abide the sad Effects of their past Vanity and Folly.

This, I wish, they would in Time consider ; and calmly and impartially look into and examine the Series of God's several Dispensations to Mankind. For, as *St. Peter* says, *we have not followed cunningly devised Fables*, but such Truths as will bear the strictest Scrutiny and Examination. And then we doubt not, but they would behold such a natural Gradation from the one to the other ; such a Connexion and Agreement between the antient Prophecies and the following Events, that they will even be ashamed, they could
ever

ever have any Doubt in their Minds concerning the divine Original of our Religion. For, let any Man make it consistent with the Principles of right Reason, if he can, to believe, that a Chain of Prophecies, reaching through several thousand Years, delivered at different Times, yet, manifestly, subservient to one and the same Administration of Providence, from Beginning to End, is the Effect of Art and Contrivance, or religious Fraud. That for so many Ages successively proper Persons should be found to carry on the Cheat; and that none of them should have any Interest to serve by betraying the Secret, or, so much Honesty and Regard to Truth, as to discover it. Such Things as these, I think, it is impossible for any thinking considerate Man to give into; and he

must not call himself a Professor and Admirer of just and sound Reasoning, but a Slave to Passion or Prejudice, or some worse Principle, who can so part with that which sweetens ordinary Conversation, adorns common Life; procures to us Peace and Safety here, and assures us of eternal Happiness hereafter. And, indeed, these Excellencies^{ies} which are inherent in our Religion, and which every judicious and impartial Reasoner must see, make the Opposition raised against it inexcusable. Christianity contains all the Discoveries of bare human Reason, free from all its Doubts, Uncertainties and Errors; and represents Virtue in its full Excellency and Perfection, in all its Beauty and Brightness. Recommending to our Practice, and that under the strongest Motives and Engagements,

ments, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, bidding us think and meditate on those Things, and give ourselves wholly to them.

Now, I would fain know what there is in natural Religion, that is worthy our Regard or Concern, which is not contained in this Description of true Christianity. And in what Philosopher among the Heathens, we shall find so excellent and perfect a Delineation of the whole Duty of Man, of all that can improve and exalt his Nature here, and fit and prepare him for a Life of perfect Virtue and Goodness, and therein of consummate Happiness here-

D 3. after.

after. And, if so, Why is there ~~this~~ Outcry against our Religion? Can there any Harm arise from the Belief and Practice of it? If it make a Man discharge all the relative Duties of a social Life; if it render him Proof against all Temptations to Evil; if no Prospect of Pleasure or Advantage can evercome the Influence it has over him, but he is kept thereby steady and resolved in that which is just and right; if such, I say, be the Effects of it, (and such are the natural Effects to be expected from it, and are always accompanied with it, where it has due and just Weight given it) Shall we be so foolish, so much Enemies to ourselves, and the Welfare of Society, as to give it up, for I know not what? For *the weak and beggarly Elements of the World, whereunto* Infidels

dels desire to bring us again in Bondage? Shall we, whilst we be travelling to our heavenly City, *which bath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God,* lay by in the Day-time, whilst the Sun shineth, that we may see how rightly we can pursue our Way by the uncertain Light of the Moon, or a worse Direction? No. Let us not be found so insensible of the great Blessing we enjoy in having God's Will revealed to us, through his abundant Mercy; but, withstanding all the Attempts of our Enemies, gratefully acknowledge our Obligations to him for it. And, I think, we may very reasonably require them to join with us in the Profession of the Christian Faith, as the best Means at least hitherto discovered to engage Men to live, as becomes Creatures endued with Reason, *soberly,*
D 4. *righteously,*

righteously, and godly in this present World, till they can find a Religion better founded, more worthy of God for its Author, and more conducive to the Happiness and Perfection of human Nature.

We see then upon the Whole, who are our Enemies, against whom it concerns us very nearly to join together; the *Infidels* on the one Side, and the *Papists* on the other. We have, it may be, some Differences amongst ourselves; but let us imitate the Prudence and Conduct of the ancient *Romans*. That wise People were wont in a common Danger, *denare Inimicitias Reipublicæ*, to give up and sacrifice their private Enmities and Quarrels to the public Good and Safety of the Commonwealth.

S E R M O N X. 69

Wealth. Cardinal *Bellarmino* has reckoned fifteen Marks of the true Church; but he has omitted *Charity*, which is a Mark worth all the Rest. Let us shew forth *that* by our brotherly Love and Affection for one another. Hereby shall we prove that Bulwark against our Enemies, which, by no other Means, we can be. For hereby we shall preserve our established national Religion, firmly united and compacted in all the Parts of it; which alone can support and maintain the Protestant Religion amongst us, against all the Arts and Attempts of its Enemies; which little Sects, and separate Congregations can never do; but will be like a Foundation of Sand to a weighty Building, which, whatever Shew it may make, cannot stand long, because it wants Union at

the Foundation; and for that Reason, must necessarily want Strength and Firmness; and therefore those, who, under a Pretence of decrying human Schemes, Creeds and Confessions, endeavour still to keep us asunder, must never be reckoned true Friends to the Protestant Cause.

But, as without Thee, O God, we can do nothing, do thou so illuminate our Minds, that we may all unite in thy true and uncorrupted Religion, and see and do, upon all Occasions, those Things which tend to our Peace and Safety, and thy Honour in this World; and thereby prepare us for that Happiness, which thou hast graciously promised us in that which is to come, even for Jesus Christ's Sake,
our

S E R M O N X. 71

our only Lord and Saviour, to whom,
with the Father and the Holy Ghost,
be ascribed all Honour and Glory,
Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiv-
ing, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

D 6

SER-

S E R M O N XI.

War, the most dreadful Judgment
God can inflict upon a Nation.

Preached on the *Fast-Day* for the War
with *France* and *Spain*,

January the 7th, 1746-7.

At *St. Peter's, Mancroft*, and *St. John's*,
Maddermarket, in *Norwich*.

Jeremiah xlvii. 6, 7.

*O thou Sword of the Lord, How long will
it be, e'er thou be quiet? Put up thy-
self into thy Scabbard; rest and be still.
How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord
hath given it a Charge against Ash-
kelon, and against the Sea-Shore?
There hath he appointed it.*

THE Sword of War is so terri-
ble a Judgment, is attended with
so many great Evils and grievous Ca-
lamities,

lamities, that no wise nor good Man can help lamenting the Case of any People, who are afflicted with it. We see, in my Text, in what a pathetical and affectionate Manner the Prophet *Jeremiah* expresses his Concern, even for the *Philistines*, under these heavy Circumstances, who were, and always had been the declared Enemies of the People of God. *O thou Sword of the Lord, How long will it be e'er thou be quiet?* And he adds, likewise, a Wish or Prayer for them; *Put up thyself into thy Scabbard; rest and be still.* Thus far, we see, the Man prevailed. Natural Compassion for a distressed People forced from him those humane and tender Expressions. But then, calling to Mind, and considering the incorrigible Wickedness and Impiety of that People, we find him quickly resuming the Prophet,
and

and thus expostulating and answering himself. *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a Charge against Ashkelon, and against the Sea-Shore? There hath he appointed it.* From which we are taught this momentous and important Lesson, that no People must look for or expect the Removal of any Judgment, which God has thought fit to bring upon them, and punish them with, till they have put away those Sins, which raised the divine Wrath against them.

Can we hear this Doctrine and not be moved? Or has War, by its long Continuance amongst us, lost all its Terror? Can we daily hear of the Miseries of our Fellow Creatures; of Thousands after Thousands falling by the Sword, and not find ourselves affected

fectcd with Grief and Compassion for them? How many innocent and worthy Persons, driven from their Houses, are now wandering in this rigorous Season with their Wives and Children, destitute of all the Comforts and Necessaries of Life? And can we think of these Things, and not have a Fellow-feeling for them? It might have been our own Case; and when it came Home lately almost to our Doors, we were sufficiently terrified, and began in good earnest to think, that it did not a little concern us by Repentance and good Works, to avert the Displeasure of our offended God, and the dreadful Effects of it which then encompassed us. This the Almighty saw; and to shew how ready he always is to receive returning Sinners to Mercy, upon our Application to him, by
Ways

Ways so acceptable to him, he blessed our Arms with Victory, drove away our Enemies who invaded us, and brought those Rebels of our own Country, who most ungratefully and unnaturally joined to enslave or distress us, to the Punishment they deserved. This, I hope, with pious and grateful Hearts we acknowledged on the Day of public Thanksgiving, which we lately celebrated. But still God, we may observe, deals with us as with Men; *he knoweth that we are but Dust*; frail and imperfect Creatures at the best. *That our Goodness is as the Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it passeth away.* Our Joy we express in Bonfires, and it vapours away in the Smoke. Our Passions are volatile and unsteady, and that religious Sense, which a Deliverance not so suddenly to be expected caused in us, would

would scarce have been sufficient to fix and keep those Passions in due Bounds, if God had freed us at once from all further Fear and Apprehension. He therefore still continues this Judgment upon us, though, in Mercy, he keeps it at a greater Distance. Thus does God correct us, *as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth*. He holds the Rod still over us, but it is only to keep us in Awe, and restrain us within the Bounds of our Duty. Our Zeal for his pure and uncorrupted Religion has been exceedingly pleasing in his Sight, and, like Charity, has covered the Multitude of our Sins. To this we may very justly ascribe our being still continued in the Enjoyment of our religious and civil Rights and Liberties. For, if God had dealt with us after our Sins, and rewarded us according to our Wickednesses,

ednesses, far otherwife, I am afraid, had been the Event. God might, with but too much Justice, have given us over as a Prey unto our Enemies, and have made those that hate us Lords over us. Let us then shew forth the grateful Sense we have of his past Mercy and loving Kindness towards us, by a more than ordinary Care over our future Conduct; and not thus, Year after Year, repeat this Humiliation of ourselves, and be neither better in our Practice, nor more sincere and hearty in our Devotions.

We have now gone through a most solemn Service to our God; but let us lay our Hands upon our Hearts, and say, *What have we done?* How have we been affected, and what Fruits are we like to bring forth *meet for Repen-*
tance,

tance, and becoming the Circumstances we are in? For we cannot surely think, that a bare Repetition of Prayers, how excellently soever composed, will avail with the Almighty to blot out our Sins, or remove his judgments. We should have it always in our Minds, that God hearkens and hears, whether we speak aright or not. He sees the most secret Recesses of our Souls; he knows the inward Motions of them; and, therefore, we may be assured, unless he finds an exact Correspondence between those and our outward Expressions, he will turn away his Ear from us, and regard us not. We must sincerely repent of, and be heartily sorry for the Sins and Offences we have been guilty of. We must immediately put them away from us, and earnestly resolve never to engage in them more; or we may, Year after

after Year, even Day after Day, repeat over the same Prayers, and reap no Benefit therefrom. We have said unto God, "that we are grieved and wearied with the Burden of our Sins." But it concerns us highly to consider, Whether there has not been a Lie in our Mouths? Let us try and examine our Hearts. Have we, with Meekness and Contrition, acknowledged our Vileness, or do we truly repent us of our Faults? If not, What is this but mocking God, and affronting him to his Face? We have begged of him "to be favourable unto us, who turn to him in Weeping, Fasting, and Praying:" But have we that real Sorrow in our Hearts we pretend to; or have our Prayers been earnest, fervent and sincere? God is indeed a merciful and gracious Being, full of Compassion,

long

long Suffering, and of great Pity. He spareth when we deserve Punishment, and in his Wrath thinketh upon Mercy. But then we are to consider, *that there is Forgiveness with him that he may be feared*, but not that he should therefore be despised and affronted. His Mercy is as much an Enemy to our Sins as his Justice; and is intended to win us to a grateful Sense of his Goodness, and to make us even ashamed of offending him. And it must argue a most base and disingenuous Mind, if it have not that Effect with us, and must certainly bring upon us, at the last, the more severe Punishment.

This is a solemn *Fast*, very wisely and seasonably appointed by our Sovereign for obtaining Pardon for our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgments,
which

which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved ; and imploring his Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of his Majesty, and for restoring and perpetuating Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to himself and his Kingdoms. But how do many among us observe this *Fast* ? Do we afflict our Bodies with a strict Abstinence, that, so by giving us a Taste of the Hardships we should be forced to endure, should we ever be compelled to wander in a foreign Country, destitute of all the Comforts and Necessaries of Life, we may be duly sensible of the Blessings we enjoy, and our Bodies thereby be rendered fit and proper Instruments to promote and help forward the Grief and Trouble of our Minds ? Or may it not be said of too many amongst us, as the *Prophet* said to the *Jews* upon the like Occasion,

Behold,

Behold, in the Day of your Fast you find Pleasure, and exact all your Labours. I hope this is not the Case of any of us here present upon this Day.

In this Season, wherein we commemorate the great Blessing of our Saviour's Incarnation and Birth, we have most of us, it is probable, indulged ourselves in the usual Gratifications of our Senses, and, perhaps, more so than has been consistent with the sacredness of the Time and Occasion. This Solemnity, which we this Day are directed to observe, comes in very properly to call Home our Minds, and make us bethink ourselves of the Judgments which threaten us, lest, whilst we promise to ourselves nothing but Joy and Gladness, we be surprized with Calamities, and be forced to drink deep of the bit-

ter

ter Cup of Affliction and Sorrow. It becomes us then to take Care that our Minds be filled with suitable Reflections, and that we pass this Day in such a Manner, as may influence our whole Behaviour for the Time to come. *If now ye will loose the Bands of Wickedness, undo the heavy Burdens, and let the Oppressed go free, and break every Yoke of Sin, we shall find the good Effects thereof upon our future Conduct. If we will but now begin to deal our Bread to the Hungry, and provide Cloathing and Lodging for the Poor, we shall find a charitable Temper of Mind arising from it, and give ourselves a Relish of that Virtue, which will administer true Peace and Satisfaction of Mind to us here, and recommend us to that all-gracious Being, to whom, next to that of a good Conscience, no Sacrifice*

rice is so acceptable, and who will most certainly reward us for it to all Eternity hereafter.

These Things every one of us should set about with great Earnestness and Resolution. For, as our Community is made up of Individuals, if every one would take Care to reform and amend himself, we should soon put a Stop to the crying Sins of this Nation; to that Prophaneness and Infidelity, to those Heresies and Schisms, those gross Impurities and other manifold Offences, which have long called for the Severity of God's Wrath, and which may, but too justly, make us afraid that the Time is not far off, when he will therefore deliver us to the Reproaches and Insults, the Tyranny and Oppression of our Enemies. We have long enjoyed

86 S E R M O N XI.

the Light of his Countenance, and the Blessings of his bountiful Hand. Hitherto he has been to us a *Tower of Defence* against all the Assaults of our Enemies, *our Shield and Buckler* in the Day of Battle. But, unless we now *turn from the Error of our Ways, and put away the Evil of our Doings from before his Eyes*, we cannot expect that he should *put up the Sword into his Scabbard*, or regard our Supplications. For how can we reasonably hope that our War should cease, whilst we retain those Sins, and persist in those Practices, for the which the Lord said unto the Sword, *Sword go through the Land, and cut off Man and Beast from it!*

We, of this Kingdom, are as *Askelon*; we are placed on the Sea-Shore, and many are the Enormities which
arise

arise among us from such our Situation. We are thereby enabled to extend our Trade to the whole known World. Hence flow to us, from all Quarters, Wealth and Riches in Abundance, which have been but too productive amongst us of Pride and Luxury, those certain Destroyers of every State and Kingdom, where they have been permitted to prevail and reign; which is, indeed, but a natural Effect of those two Vices: For the former makes People injurious and oppressive, and the other quite enervates and weakens them, and renders them quite unable to contend with those Enemies their Haughtiness and Injustice have raised, and so make them fall, at last, Victims to their Indignation and Fury. It is to be looked upon as a happy Circumstance in the present War, that this

88 S E R M O N XI.

Nation, however proud and haughty it may be, has not drawn it upon itself by any Injury or Injustice it has done those Powers who are risen up against us. The Fault in this Respect is on their Side, and this must turn to our Advantage. But, I fear, the many Defeats our Forces have met with both by Sea and Land, have been owing, amongst other Causes, to the Luxury which reigns amongst them. This has enervated and made them weak and feeble, despoiled them of that steady Courage and Magnanimity, which used to be the distinguishing *Mark of true Englishmen*; and God, with whom it is usual to punish Vices by their natural Effects, hath not always thought fit to prevent this of Luxury from meeting with the Fate it is naturally subject to. And little Reason, indeed, we had to expect

pect he should, since herein we have been all of us but too justly punished. For what Degree and Order of Men amongst us is there, which is free from Luxury? A Vice, which used to be confined to the Great, even the Lowest now are not exempted from; insomuch that even the Necessaries of Life are sometimes given up by them for a luxurious Draught. How are most of us degenerated from that *old English Plainness*, both in Dress and Diet, which shewed the good Sense of, and gave Strength and Spirit to our Ancestors? Then were we the Terror of all around us. Our Sobriety and Temperance gave Vigour to our Bodies, and our Lives being answerable to the Purity of our Religion, inspired us with a Courage not our own. For God, being pleased with our Manners, armed us

with Fortitude; *girded us with Strength unto the Battle*, and threw down our Enemies under us.

What Effect then ought these Reflections to have upon us? Should they not, in all Reason, very strongly move us to a Reformation in these Respects? We should then not only recover our former Strength of Body, and Vigour of Mind; not only be less terrified at the Apprehension or Approach of any Enemy, but also avoid many other Evils and great Inconveniences which our Pride and Luxury bring upon us. In what Difficulties are many Persons involved, by imitating their Superiors in Station and Fortune! And then to what Temptations are they exposed, and even sometimes almost forced to comply with! Hence it is, that we see so many Persons,
natu-

S E R M O N XI. 91

naturally of good Principles, of pious and virtuous Dispositions, reduced to be the Tools of other Peoples Baseness, and Promoters of Projects they themselves have the greatest Averſion to. Strange it is, that Men of Senſe ſhould thus ſuffer themſelves to be carried away by the Stream of Faſhion and Folly, even contrary to the Checks and Admonitions of their own Minds; that they ſhould chooſe to live in a continual Courſe of Self-Condernation. I know of no State of Life ſo wretched as is that of ſuch an one, when all a Man's Reflections upon his paſt Conduct muſt end in Shame and Remorſe. How contrary to this is the Life of thoſe Few, who live according to the Rules of right Reaſon and Religion! With what Pleaſure do they ſee their honeſt Induſtry crowned with Succeſs! What

Satisfaction do they feel from easy Circumstances. With what Chearfulness do they receive and converse with their Friends? What Quickness of Spirits are they always blessed with from their Temperance and Sobriety! How ready, as well as able, are they to succour and relieve the Distressed! How grateful is it to them to find themselves enabled, by their Wisdom and Prudence, to serve their Country, and recommending themselves to the Esteem and Affection of their Fellow-Creatures! But above all, How delightful is it to them to reflect, that they are employed in discharging that Part which God has assigned to them in this Life, and preparing and qualifying themselves thereby for that eternal State of perfect Happiness which he has provided for them in the Life to come. And can

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we want then any further Motives to join with these, though of the smaller Number? They are not, therefore, the less valuable. It is the Rarity makes the Jewel; and if Diamonds were as common as Pebbles, How greatly would they fall in their Value? Only there is this Difference in the Comparison, that we shall not lessen the Value of good Men by increasing the Number. For how many soever they are, each one will still be of the same Esteem in the Sight of God. The Reason is, because such are valuable in themselves, whereas other Things owe the greatest Part of their Price to the Fancies and Humours of vain Men.

We have lately beheld the melancholy Effects of a contrary Conduct. How many Persons have involved them-

selves in Guilt and Misery by Luxury and its Attendants, who were naturally Men of noble and generous Minds, and endowed with such Parts and Abilities, as, if duly exerted and applied, might have made them the Ornaments and Boast of their Country! But by wasting their Fortunes in Rioting and Extravagance, they became desperate, and joined with a Parcel of Ruffians, whom before they despised; and in Actions the most abhorrent from their Nature. This produced a strange Change in them; and that Nobleness and Generosity of Nature, degenerating into Pride, darkened their Reason in such a Manner, that rather than own themselves to have been in the Wrong, all their Endeavours were to palliate what they had done, and persuade themselves and others, that the Cause

was

was just they engaged in. And, as if Repentance and Confession of Sin, as if a humble and devout Deportment at the Hour of Death, were Arguments of a mean Mind, and unbecoming a Soldier; and as if a bold and daring Spirit were to pass for Innocence and Bravery, they rush into their Creator's Presence, as if they were indeed to take Heaven by Force. But, supposing the Cause just they fought and died for; Was such a Behaviour becoming? We do not find that the Martyrs of old, whose Lives were pious and good, and whose Cause was most indisputably just, ever behaved in such a Manner. On the Contrary, they offered up their Souls to God with Modesty and Humility, as Persons thoroughly sensible, how much the best of Men stand in Need of Mercy at the Hands of God. If these

Persons had made a due Recollection of their past Lives, they would not have seemed so perfect to themselves, as by their Behaviour in their last Moments they would have us think they were. Some of them had taken the Oaths to the present Government; and in the most solemn Manner abjured that very Person they took up Arms for. And yet we hear them making no Mention of their Perjury; which surely, had they entertained a just Sense of the Heinousness of that Crime, they must have done, under what Necessity soever they might before have thought themselves bound to break through them. Perjury is a Crime of so base a Nature, so offensive in the Sight both of God and Man, that one would have thought, they must, with Tears, have then acknowledged their Sin therein, and publicly

licly have asked Pardon for it. God knows the State of their Souls; to his Mercy we leave them: Only let us take heed not to be misled by them, or to think their Cause the better, because they met the Punishment of their Rebellion with such seeming Courage and Resolution. Innocence is not always the Ground of outward Confidence; nor is it any Breach of Christian Charity to suspect the Ground of such appearing Confidence, in Cases where Crimes are public and notorious, and no public Confession or Acknowledgment made of them. They would fain have us think their Punishment very hard and severe, though agreeable to the known Laws of their Country; and though they avowed the same Principles to the last; though they shewed no Change of Mind, or any Repentance
or

or Concern for what they had done; nay, though they declared they would act the same Part over again, were it in their Power. How then could it be prudent or consistent with our own Safety, to let such Persons loose upon us again, who threatened our Ruin in so open a Manner? The greater their Abilities were, the more necessary it was to guard against them. But let them compare it with the Usage some of them met with from the Person whose Cause they espoused. How did he, with a most ungenerous and unheard of Barbarity, place them in such a Situation, as that they must die either by the Sword, or the Hand of Justice? This he exposed Multitudes to without Remorse or Pity. Hereby he shewed the Love and Regard he bore to *Englishmen*; and thereby we may see, what we were

were to expect, if he had succeeded in his Enterprize. This, surely, should open all our Eyes, and convince us how utterly impossible it is, that ever we should be preserved in the Enjoyment of our civil and religious Rights, under the Government of a pretended Prince, who has treated his own Followers in so dishonourable, treacherous and cruel a Manner. Our gracious Sovereign has made no more Examples than were absolutely necessary, to deter others from the like Crimes, and secure the Peace and Safety of our Community. The Number he has taken off, bear no Proportion, not even to the Number of those who were exposed to certain Death, by the Man they fought for, and much less to the Number of all those who have been concerned in this Rebellion.

And

And can we then this Day remain unmoved, when the Sword be yet untheathed, and our Enemies are still endeavouring to place this Tyrant over us? What Judgment is there more dreadful that can come upon us? We are threatened, indeed, with a very grievous one, by a Distemper which now rages amongst our Cattle, and by Worms or Cankers, which have already destroyed, and go on still devouring the Fruits of our Ground. But even a Famine, and its Attendant the Pestilence, are not so fatal, and not so much to be dreaded by us, as a Kingdom, as this which we have been long endeavouring to keep off from us. Such was *David's* Judgment of the Tyranny of Man, when he said, *Let us fall now into the Hand of the Lord,* (for his Mercies are great) *and let me*
not

not fall into the Hand of Man. For those Judgments are personal, and of short Continuance; but when once a tyrannick Government be set up; when once that of Popery and arbitrary Power be fixed upon us, no one can tell when that will end; not only we ourselves, but our latest Posterity may groan under it. Let us then cry mightily unto the Lord, that he may save us; that he may still deliver us from all those grievous Calamities, which are now set in array against us, and threaten us on every Side. Let us give a Part of our Substance to the Poor, as an Offering and Acknowledgment to God of his Preservation of us hitherto, and to engage his future Protection of us. But above all let us put away those Sins which have provoked the Lord to send his Sword against us; and manifest

nifest the Regard we have for his pure and uncorrupted Faith, by conforming and regulating our Lives according to it; lest, as we are taught in the Gospel for this Day's Solemnity, our Fate should resemble that of the Fig-Tree. After three Years Trial without Fruit, the Master allowed it but one Year more, and then, if it bore no Fruit, down it was to go. We have now been tried seven Years. It concerns us then highly, that we at Length bring forth Fruit, lest a Sentence of Extirpation proceeds against us. Let us then turn unto the Lord with all our Hearts; let us bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, so will our God take a Pleasure in us; lend a favourable Ear to our Prayers; drive away all those dreadful Evils of which we are afraid; preserve to us our excellent King and Govern-

Government ; establish us in Peace and Prosperity, and at Christ's second Coming to judge the World, place us in a State of perfect Joy and Happiness for evermore ; which, that we may render ourselves worthy of, God of his infinite Mercy grant us his Grace and Assistance, for Jesus Christ's Sake, our only Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

S E R.

S E R M O N XII.

Conscience, the Voice of God within
us, to govern and direct our Actions.

P R E A C H E D A T

St. John's Maddermarket, July the 19th,

A N D A T

St. Peter's, Mancroft, August 23, 1747.

Micah vi. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is
good.*

WHILST Men are disputing about
the true Foundation of Morality,
and the Obligations they are under to
the Practice of it, we find the Sub-
stance often lost or neglected in the ea-
ger Pursuit of their own Fancies. Some
found Morality upon what they call the
moral

moral Sense; upon an instinctive Approbation of right, and Abhorrence of wrong; prior to all Reflection on their Nature, or their Consequences; upon that discerning Faculty, which, they say, God has placed in every Man, whereby he can, upon all Occasions, judge what is right, and what not. Others place it in those eternal Relations, and essential Differences of Things, which, they imagine, must lay open to every one, and be the only sufficient Rule, to direct us in the Knowledge, and consequently in the Observance of our Duty. Now these, indeed, we might acquiesce in, if we had no further Light than what the Dictates of natural Reason could afford. The *Heathens*, as the Apostle says, (*Rom. ii. 14, 15.*) *having not the Law, were a Law unto themselves; their Conscience bearing Witness to that*

that Law, they amongst themselves, in the Reasoning of their own Minds, *accusing or excusing one another*. But how imperfect that was; how unable to secure the Practice of Morality, is not only seen by the History of those Nations, who were under that Guide, but by the very Treatises and Systems of moral Philosophy, which the greatest Men amongst them have left us; and yet those carry Matters much higher than ever their Practice rose to. It is inconsistent with the required Brevity of this Discourse to mention Particulars. Those who are acquainted with the Writings of the *Gentile* World, know the Truth of what I say; and those who are not, would find little Service from the Knowledge of them, however the *minute* Philosophers of the present Age take Care to retail amongst us, what-
ever

ever they find in those admired Moralists. Now did their Endeavours proceed from a Desire of displaying and commending the Abilities and Industry of those illustrious Men of Antiquity, which were truly admirable, considering the Light they enjoyed, we are as ready as they can be, to give them the same just Esteem and Commendation. But when they extol them to the Prejudice of Revelation, and prefer their narrow Schemes to the extensive Views of the Gospel, we can but pity their Folly, and shall leave them by themselves to wander in that Darkness they are so fond of, and continue to direct our own Steps by the glorious Light communicated to us by our blessed Saviour. By him God hath *shewed us what is good*; the Measures of our Duty are by Him most clearly and convincingly set forth
and

and explained to us, and our Well-being here, and our Happiness hereafter most evidently made appear to arise from and depend upon our Practice of them. In the Revelations he has left us of the Divine Will, we see the eternal Relations and essential Differences of Things displayed ; the moral Sense in us, those Powers and Faculties, whereby we are enabled to discern between good and evil, wonderfully improved and enlarged ; and our acting according to them shewed to be no other than performing the Will of God. He was the Author of all those Relations and essential Differences of Things: He it was who placed in us that moral Sense, those Powers and Faculties, whereby we distinguish between good and evil ; and, therefore, that which will make all our Conduct truly pious
and

and virtuous, is, *in whatsoever we do, doing all to the Glory of God*: That is, when we act according to all those Relations and Differences of Things; when we behave agreeably to our moral Sense, those natural Notions we have of good and evil; if our ultimate End and Design be to do thereby what we know is pleasing to God, we therein add a Worth to our best Actions, and make those virtuous in a christian Sense, which would be otherwise only right.

For we are to consider, we are not now upon the Foot which *Heathens* were. Their chief End was to recommend themselves to the Esteem and Veneration of the World, For, from Men they expected their Reward; and as to the secret Motives of their Actions, they were little concerned about them,

and thought it sufficient, if they were good and beneficial to their Fellow-Creatures. As to the supreme Being, they saw not how his Glory or Honour were concerned in what was here done below; and therefore it is no Wonder they had it not in View in what they did. But we are better taught: The Gospel informs us, *that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the Glory of God.* Not only the most heroic, virtuous and pious Actions may be made by us to redound to his Honour and Glory, but even Actions of the most indifferent Nature and smallest Moment. By having it in our Intention, and that being our Motive in them, to please and do honour to our God, we give a Worth to them, whilst, by the same Means, we add a Lustre to Actions truly excellent and valuable

S E R M O N X I I . I I I

valuable in themselves. We do, indeed, what is grateful to our Minds, when we act according to the Dictates of that moral Sense, that instinctive Approbation of Right, and Abhorrence of Wrong, placed in us by our all-wise Creator. And when we comply with the essential Differences of Things, we promote the Order and Harmony of the Universe. But then only we entitle ourselves to Reward; then only are we Christians pleasing in the Sight of God, when we do all this in Obedience to his divine Will, with a View to his Honour and Glory.

But in these three Motives of Action, who can help admiring the Goodness and Wisdom of God, who graciously respecting the Imperfections of human Nature, the Weakness of his Reason,

and the Violence of his Passions, hath been pleased thus to give three different Incitements to the Pract of Virtue, that Men of all Ranks, Constitutions, and Educations, might find their Account in one or other of them; something that would hit their Palate, satisfy their Reason, or subdue their Wills. The first Principle, which is the moral Sense, would strongly operate upon those, who, by the exact Temperature and Ballance of the Passions, were disengaged enough to feel the Delicacy and Excellence of moral Sense; and had an Elegance of Mind to be charmed with the Nobleness of its Dictates. The second, which is the essential Difference, is calculated to have its Weight with the Speculative, the abstracted and profound Reasoners, and on all those who excel in the Knowledge of Mankind.

kind. And the Third, which resolves itself into the Will of God, and takes in all the Consequences of Obedience and Disobedience, is adapted to all Men. The first Two were the Principles which the *Heathens* had to incite and guide them to Virtue; and from those few, who were influenced by them, we find very pleasing and rational Effects. But they themselves saw the Weakness and Insufficiency of them, to the engaging the Generality of Mankind in the constant Practice of moral Duties. Mens Desires after Pleasure and Profit they found too strong to be governed and restrained by that instinctive Approbation they had of right, and their as natural disapproving of what was wrong. When themselves, indeed, were the injured Persons, they discovered plainly the Ex-

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cellency of the one, and the Baseness of the other; but when the Case was contrary, and they were pursuing their own Gratification or Advantage to the Detriment or Oppression of others, they were then deaf to the Dictates of the moral Sense, and became insensible to its Checks and Remonstrances. Nor had the essential Difference a more constant Effect even with the speculative, the abstracted and profound Reasoners; however, in their sober Thoughts and retired Meditations, they saw and were convinced that the doing what was right, tended to the supporting Order and Harmony in the World; and that Ruin and Confusion followed a contrary Conduct; yet, upon any strong Temptation, when they had any favourite Scheme to bring about, and a Deviation from their Rules seemed necessary, they

they little regarded, we find, what became of the essential Relation and Difference of Things, but leaving the Author of Nature to take Care of and Support his own Work, pursued the Purpose they had in View steadily and resolutely. They were often Sufferers themselves by such Measures, and that frequently brought them to Reflection: And hence arose a Desire and Endeavour to prevent, if it might be, the like Manner of Proceeding in others. To this we owe the many Systems of Morality and Exhortations to Virtue, left us by the *Heathen* Moralists. But little did it avail with the Generality of Mankind to be put in Mind what passed within their own Breasts. Virtue, without a Dowry, had not Charms sufficient in itself to get Admittance, when Vice came with the Allurements of

Pleasure, and Dishonesty shewed the Way to Riches and Honour. How often soever they had inculcated upon them a Regard to the public Good, which absolutely depended upon the Observation of what was just and right, and abstaining from all Wrong and Oppression, yet respect to their own private Emolument proved too strong for such abstracted Considerations to prevail with them. They, therefore, found it necessary to call in other Motives to effect what those we have mentioned were too weak for. This made them have Recourse to the Doctrine of a future State, to which their Minds were directed, it is probable, by some divine Influence. But nevertheless they who taught it, did not always believe what themselves inculcated. However, it seemed so agreeable to Reason and the
natural

S E R M O N XII. 117

natural Notions they had of Things, that most Men were quickly affected by it, and those who at first taught it without believing it, became, some of them, so persuaded of it, that they were not a little moved by it in the Conduct of their own Lives. And yet their not being absolutely certain of it, made them very frequently unable to resist any strong Temptation which courted them to the Gratification of their Senses or ambitious Views; and much less could they be prevailed upon to stand their Ground, if they must expose themselves for the Sake of Virtue to any very great Evils or grievous Hardships.

God be thanked, our Condition is greatly superior. Life and Immortality are brought to perfect Light by the

Gospel. In that we have *the Promise, not only of the Life that now is, but also of that which is to come.* God hath therein plainly *shewed us what is Good*; what will most probably redound to our Well-being here; but most certainly that which will secure to us eternal Happiness hereafter. This it becomes us, therefore, to acquaint ourselves with, and rejoice in. This we ought ever to have grateful Thoughts of in our Minds; and raise and fix in our Souls such a just Sense of its great and infinite Moment and Importance to us, that we may never lose Sight or be unmindful of it; but in all our Conduct act with a View to it, that we may not finally miss of it. The Way and Means thereto is, not to entangle and distract our Minds with the various Disputes and Questions amongst Mankind, about

about what Principles they shall found Morality upon, but apply ourselves to the Practice of the Thing itself; hearkening to the Motives and Dictates of God's blessed Spirit, either in ourselves, or in the Revelations he has been graciously pleased to give us of his Will. For God does in both *shew us what is Good*, and if we will attend impartially to what they teach and suggest to us, our Behaviour will be such, upon all Occasions, as we shall approve in our own Thoughts, and know to be pleasing in the Sight of God. God's Mercy is over all his Works. In every Animal he hath implanted such an Instinct, as directs it to the greatest Good it is capable of. And the like he has done for Man. In us he hath placed, what Philosophers call, the moral Sense; and the divine Writings, Conscience. It is

by that we see and approve of what is Right, and naturally dislike that which is Wrong. This Instinct every one of us will find, upon Reflection, to have been at first very strong in us, and in scarce any is it deprived of its whole Force; however, from a long Course of Vice and Wickedness, some Men may have grown deaf to its Dictates. It is the still small Voice of God speaking in us, shewing to us continually what is Good; setting before us and commending the Charms of Virtue; reminding us of the Peace and Happiness to which it leads. When we be tempted to deviate from its Paths, to do that which is wrong or unjust, hard or oppressive, it checks and pulls us back; it suggesteth to us how base and unworthy of us such Actions are; how destructive of our present Well-being and

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Satisfaction of Mind ; how inconsistent with our Hopes of eternal Happiness hereafter.

The Voice of God then in us, it behoves us greatly to attend to : For that is ever with us, always at Hand to incite us to that which is Good, and divert us from all Evil. When we obey its Directions, our own Mind will commend and applaud us; as they will severely reproach and condemn us, when we willingly and deliberately act contrary to them. There are, most certainly, essential Differences of Things. Some Things have different Relations, different Respects or Proportions towards others. It is as plain that some Circumstances are fit and suitable to certain Persons, and others unfit and improper, founded in the Nature of Things

Things, and the Qualifications of Persons. And hence it follows, that unless we behave according to those different Relations and Respects, both in Persons and Things, we run counter to the Will of God, who hath caused such different Relations, Respects and Circumstances. The divine Will itself is exercised and exerted, as far as we can perceive it, in a Manner agreeable to the same; in an exact Conformity to the Rules of Justice, Equity, Goodness and Truth. And therefore Men who write upon this Subject, call those the Rules of his Actions. But whether it be right and becoming Creatures to speak of their Creator in the Stile they speak of one another, I leave them to consider. But, for my Purpose, it is sufficient to say, that all his Dealings with us, are ever good and equitable,

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exactly fitted to the Nature and Reason of Things, and the Relations, Circumstances, and Qualifications of Persons. And therefore, as they are so, What better Example can we follow? What Being can we so well imitate? Whatever we do in Conformity to such his Example must most certainly be right and best. *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, is his own Precept to us, his Creatures; the most forcible Argument and engaging Motive possible to a virtuous and holy Life. The Imitation of himself is what he therein recommendeth to us. But wherein has he set us an Example? We need only open our Eyes, and look about us, and we see the Effects of his working on every Side. His perfect Rectitude, Equity, and Goodness, he has displayed in his Creation and Government of this World; in the Order of Things
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and Designation of Persons; turning all the Schemes and Projects of Mankind to one great End and Design: Giving an Opportunity to all his faithful Servants, by the Exercise of all moral and christian Virtues, to recommend themselves to his Love and Favour, and qualify themselves for a perfect State of Joy and Happiness to all Eternity. That by resembling him here in those his moral Perfections, we may likewise for ever resemble him in the natural Effects of them, that inward Peace of Mind and Self-Approbation, the sure Source of true Felicity. The Happiness of God himself ariseth from his perfect Rectitude, Equity and Goodness. The Angels partake of the same Happiness in Proportion as they resemble him in those Perfections; and so shall we too, if, after their Example, we be

be just, good and holy in all our Ways. That Change of Place can never make us happy is plain from hence, that Happiness does not arise from any outward Circumstance, but from the inward State and Reflection of our own Minds. How frequently do we see People wretched in the most stately Palaces, adorned with all that the Art and Ingenuity of Man can contrive, heedlessly passing by the most beautiful Furniture, and most exquisite Paintings, uneasy and discontented in themselves, because destitute of all that sweet Repose, which a good and clear Conscience can only give. It is this alone which can make us enjoy ourselves here, and which can make Heaven itself a State of Happiness to us hereafter. For Goodness and Happiness are, indeed, but synonymous Terms, or Words denoting

noting the same Thing. In this Respect alone we are capable of resembling God, whilst we be in this World. His Power and Knowledge we cannot, in any Degree worth mentioning, imitate or copy after: But when we do any Thing which is right, just or good, we resemble him in that which is most beneficial and profitable to ourselves, and which is most amiable and pleasing in his Sight. What Folly and Perverseness then is it in most of us to neglect that Way alone, whereby we can be like God, and vainly aim at those Perfections, which the Faculties of our Souls are not capacious enough to comprehend, nor the Powers of our Bodies in any considerable Measure sufficient to arrive at. And yet no Bounds, we are apt to think, can be put to our Advances in Knowledge. The Topicks which
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are level to our Capacities we despise, and nothing will satisfy us, unless, like the Holy Spirit, we be allowed to search all Things, even the deep Things of God. So wise we are in our own Eyes, that we scorn to have our Understandings prescribed to by the Preconceptions of others, how divinely soever inspired. And when, in the Revelations of God's Will, we find some Things proposed as the Objects of our Faith, which, concerning or appertaining to his divine Nature, our finite Capacities cannot comprehend, we are unwilling to suspect our own Want of Ability, but, following the Dictates of our own Pride and Vanity, impiously choose rather to reject the Doctrine, than assent to the Truth of what we find above our Reason. But let us consider whether this be acting according to our own
Prin-

Principles, which we boast so much of. We allow, that there are Differences of Things and different Relations, Respects or Proportions of some Things towards others: That there are Differences of Beings and Persons, and a consequent Behaviour from the one to the other fit and suitable; and our acting contrary thereto, is an Offence to Reason, and therefore wrong, and which we cannot help pronouncing such in the Judgment of our own Minds; the moral Sense within us immediately disrelishing, disapproving, and condemning it. Now let us try the Matter in Hand by these Positions which we are all agreed in.

God existed from all Eternity; his Power is infinite; for all Things were made by him; in particular he was our
Creator.

Creator. He it was who first brought us into Being; from him we received our Reason, and all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls. That God, therefore, is infinitely superior to Men is as clear, as that Infinity is larger than a Point, or Eternity longer than a Moment. And what can be more fit, more agreeable to the Relation of Creatures, which we stand in to him, than to give Credit to what he tells us, to honour and worship, to obey and imitate him. We are entirely dependent upon him; he can do with us what he pleaseth; and he, on the Contrary, can in no Respect, receive any Advantage from us. All Things are in his Power; and, therefore, he can have no Temptation to use, upon any Occasion, Deceit or Injustice. No Reason, then, can be assigned, why he should reveal to us
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any Thing which is not true, or require our Belief or Acknowledgement of it ; and we can most certainly incur no Detriment, by complying with what he requires of us. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good.* Consider that he is God, and thou art Man. He knows what is good for thee, and has pointed out the Way whereby thou mayest be happy, and whereby alone thou canst be so. What then is the Result of this Argument? Surely nothing less than that we should submit ourselves to his Direction ; that it is our bounden Duty to give our unfeigned Assent without Reserve to every Thing he shall require our Belief of ; and that it must be our Wisdom and Happiness to guide ourselves in that and all other Things according to his express Will and Pleasure. So plainly do we see in what
Bounds

Bounds it becomes us to restrain our Pursuits after Knowledge. But then as to our imitating or aiming at the Power of the Almighty, I believe, we may be safely left to our own Endeavours. The Fruitlessness of our Attempts will quickly convince us of our Weakness and Folly. What then remains, but that we keep ourselves within our own Sphere; not pretend *to be wise above what is written.* But as God has *shewed us what is good,* therein employ ourselves; and what is that, but *to fear God and keep his Commandments;* for in them is placed the Whole of Man; the Whole of his Duty, the Whole of his Happiness. Leaving, therefore, the Disputers of this World to their own vain Fancies, let us follow that which will not fail to give us Ease and Comfort
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in this Life, and improve and end in perfect Happiness in that which is to come. Which, God of his infinite Mercy grant, may be the Lot of all who hear me this Day, for the Sake and Merits of his eternal and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our most blessed Redeemer and Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Three Persons and One eternal God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us and all Men, all Love, Honour and Obedience, Might, Majesty and Dominion, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and through each succeeding Period of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XIII.

The Ministers of Christ are the Ambassadors of Christ.

Preached at St. Peter's Mancroft, on St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1748.

2 Corinthians, v. 20.

*Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ,
as though God did beseech you by us:
We pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye
reconciled to God.*

IN the two foregoing and following Chapters our Apostle justifies, by various Arguments, his Plainness of Speech, and his Sincerity in preaching the Gospel. In the Verse before my Text he gives us, in a short Compendium, the

VOL. II. G Sum

134 S E R M O N XIII.

Sum of the Gospel; to wit, *that God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them.* Wherein we are to observe, first, *that God was in Christ*; and then, that by his Sufferings, Death, and Intercession, he *reconciled the World unto him.* By the former Expression, *that God was in Christ*, we are to understand the Person of the Father being in the Son, according to that Saying of our blessed Saviour; *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*; for otherwise the Expression had been improper, if we should understand by those Words that the divine Nature of Christ was in him. But the Truth is, the Father was so in the Son, that, as St. John saith, *he who hath the Son, hath the Father also.* Hence is the blessed Jesus to us the true *Emanuel*, that is, *God with us.* This

S E R M O N XIII. 135

is the Advent or Coming of God unto Men. For God was not in Christ, as he was formerly in the Prophets ; but the Father was truly in the Son, reconciling the World unto himself. This denotes the Office of Christ, his being the Propitiation for our Sins. For a Reconciliation implies there having been a Difference; and the Cause of that Separation between God and us, was not any Moroseness, Inconstancy, or any unmerited Severity in him, but our manifold Sins and heinous Provocations. These made a propitiatory Sacrifice necessary to the replacing us in his Favour. For, as God is a God of Justice as well as Mercy, that Attribute must be satisfied by a proper Atonement, before there was Room for Pardon; but Man was unable, of himself, to make such an Atonement, being,

by Sin, rendered corrupted and vile. The divine Goodness, therefore, still retaining an Affection for the Work of his own Hands, from an amazing Condescension gave up his own Son even to the Death upon the Cross, that he might pay what was due from us by his undeserved Sufferings, and expiate our Sins. Hence was God the efficient Cause of our Reconciliation with him, and Christ's Death the Means. The Manner whereby the Benefit thereof is assigned to us, is, by his blotting out our Sins, by the Blood of his Son, not imputing them unto us any more ; but upon our true Repentance and Amendment of Life, treating us henceforth as Friends, as though we had never offended him. Being thus, therefore, pardoned our Sins, we are accounted as just before him. But then this might
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have been forgotten or misrepresented, if left to be conveyed to us by the uncertain Means of human Tradition, or the various Reasonings of fallible Mortals. And therefore, says the Apostle, *he hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation*, that is, the Holy Scriptures, or the written Oracles of God. These he has directed succeeding Ministers to preach and explain unto his People; these being what alone can make them *wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus*.

Now then, in the Words of my Text, *we are Ambassadors for Christ*. But what is implied in that Expression? We shall see, if we consider what the Office of an Ambassador is. And first, as an Ambassador represents and receives Instructions from his Master,

how he shall behave in his Embassy, so is he obliged to keep to those Instructions; he is neither to go beyond them, or fall short of them. They are the Bounds in which he is to confine himself; he must not turn aside either to the Right-Hand or to the Left. He must not presume, upon his own Sentiments or private Judgment, to demand or allow any Thing which he has not a Commission for. This is what is expected and required by Princes and States, who are yet subject to Error and Mistake, and may not always see and follow their true Interest. How much stronger an Obligation then is there upon the Ambassadors of Christ, to conduct themselves after the same Manner, since their Instructions are like the Being they receive them from, full and perfect, superlatively just and good.

good. Such an Ambaffador of Chrif
 was St. *Luke*, the blessed Evangelift,
 whom we this Day commemorate. We
 have undoubted Evidence that he wrote
 by Infpiration from above, one of the
 Gospels, and the Book of the Acts of
 the Apostles. And yet, though he was
 himself one of the Seventy, sent forth
 by our Lord himself to preach the Gos-
 pel, had the Power of working Mira-
 cles, was a Person of great natural and
 acquired Abilities, and accompanied St.
Paul in his Travels and Ministry; not-
 withstanding, I say, all this, he never
 mentions his own Name once, lest
 he should be suspected of preaching
 himself, and not *Christ Jesus the Lord*.
 But St. *Paul*, who was well acquainted
 with his Worth, would not let him
 pass thus obscurely down to Posterity,
 but, by the Suggestion of the Holy

Spirit, has transfitted to us his Name, under the Title of, *The beloved Physician, whose Praise is in the Gospel*; alluding, it is probable, both to his Writings and his Labours, in propagating the Christian Religion: And, therefore, as he thought himself obliged to keep to the Instructions he had received; doubtless, for any of his Successors in the Ministry to attempt an Addition to them is impious Presumption; to diminish from them, the worst of Sacrilege; both of them highly offensive to God; and to Men detrimental beyond Expression. They are the Statutes of Heaven, and the Laws of Eternity. Therein are set forth to us God's Affection and Good-Will, and his gracious Purposes towards us; the Conditions and Means of our Happiness both here and hereafter.

And

And to remind them of their Duty, to keep strictly to them, at their Ordination, when, as Ambassadors for Christ, they receive their Commission, the Bishop puts into their Hands the Bible, to shew them, that they are intrusted thereby, to dispense the Word of God contained therein, and no other. That it may be publicly known what they are to preach, the Oracles they receive, are not hidden and sealed up, as the Instructions of earthly Ambassadors, but open and divulged to all. The Princes and States of this World have frequently many Things in View which will not bear the Light, but require a great Deal of Art and Cunning to conceal the true Meaning, not being always able to stand the Test of a just and equitable Examination. But such is not the Case with the Oracles of

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God,

God, with which the Ministers of the Gospel are intrusted, and which they are commanded to publish and explain unto the People. They are not the Productions of bare human Reason, *the weak and beggarly Elements of the World*: But the more they are searched into and examined, the more beautiful and excellent they appear. They dart an amazing Light and Rapture into the Souls of all who take upon them that delightful Work; and they who duly attend to them, at once with Joy receive the divine Doctrines and heavenly Precepts, and find themselves strongly moved to engage in the Practice of that Religion, *whose Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all whose Paths are Peace*: The Source of sweet Content and happy Enjoyment of ourselves here, and
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the same hereafter continued, and perpetually augmenting to all Eternity.

But further ; earthly Ambassadors must be often changing as Circumstances vary ; must be ever ready to put on any Shape their Masters Designs and Occasions shall require, and artificially appear what it is his Interest to be thought. And, although all their Measures be ordered, their Steps pointed out, and their least Advances prescribed by their Court, yet they will appear as complaisant and free in the most difficult Contests, as if all their Compliances were natural, and purely owing to their condescending Tempers. In fine, all their Maxims, Designs, and most refined Politics tend only to prevent being deceived themselves, and to deceive others. How different to

this is the Behaviour required of an Ambassador of Christ! He must not only appear strictly good and virtuous, but he must really be what he would seem to be. Instead of being artful, insnaring, or dark in his Conduct, he must be open, plain, honest, and sincere. What the Lord has commanded, that he must clearly and fairly teach; *not handling the Word of God deceitfully; not adding thereto, or diminishing ought from it.* For his Lips, they are which should, *preserve Knowledge, and the People are to receive the Law at his Mouth;* seeing, that he is, as the Prophet calls him, *the Messenger or Ambassador of the Lord of Hosts.* If, therefore, instead of the Doctrine of Christ, he sets up the Oracles of his own Reason; if he lay aside the Authority of Scripture, where it does not quadrate with his own
Notions

Notions of Things; if he pretend to reconcile Men to God by any other Means than those appointed by the Gospel, he betrays his Trust; he ceases to act as the Ambassador of Christ; he rebelliously sets up himself instead of his Master.

It is, indeed, a very great Misfortune, upon any Set of Men, to fall under the Direction of such erroneous Teachers, as it is upon those Princes or States who are deceived by the Promises and Engagements of Ambassadors, who have gone therein beyond their Masters Instructions, and which, therefore, they find they will not stand to. But we, Christians, have an Advantage which such have not. Earthly Ambassadors may conceal their Powers; they can, and generally are required to keep

keep their Instructions secret. But it is not thus with the Ambassadors of Christ. Their Instructions and Powers are all laid open to public View, and the People are commanded to peruse and study them. If, therefore, these suffer themselves to be deceived and led astray, it is, in a great Measure, owing to themselves. They may bring the Doctrines they hear from their Ministers *to the Law, and to the Testimony*. By them they can try, *whether they be of God*, or whether he speaks of himself.

And this it concerns all Persons to do. For God will not confirm what his Ministers or Ambassadors shall teach or promise, for which they have no Authority from Holy Scripture. If they may say, *Peace, Peace, when there be no Peace*; if they may promise Forgiveness

giveness and Absolution, upon other Terms than those the Gospel prescribes; one may then make Faith all that is necessary to that Purpose, whilst another may represent our eternal Salvation to depend alone upon our own Works; a third, in the mean Time, admitting neither the one nor the other, but ascribing all to absolute and unconditional Predestination and Election. And yet how different soever the Doctrines of all these are, each will call himself the Minister and Ambassador of Christ. But by having Recourse to the Holy Scriptures, we shall see who it is that preacheth the Gospel of Christ. And none of these can be justly angry with us for resorting to those Writings, and searching whether the Things they teach be right or not. Since every Man ought to allow and make them
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the Rule of their Faith and Practice. It is too dangerous a Piece of Complaisance, to pay an unlimited Deference to any Man, where the Point in Debate is our eternal Salvation; especially when it be so easy to inform ourselves, and see where the Truth lies. Men are subject to Mistake and Error; are frequently under the Influence of Interest or Passion. Nay, the Mode or Fashion shall sometimes carry away Men, otherwise of good Understanding, so far as to make them quite lose Sight of Truth, and follow the vainest Phantasms of Fancy, quite opposite to the Doctrines of the Religion they profess. Neglecting the Holy Scriptures they will go to *Plato* and *Aristotle*, or some modern self-conceited Reasoner they admire, to know how far they shall be Christians, and make no Difficulty

culty of rejecting any Doctrine which does not agree with their Rules, and cannot be fathomed by their Plummets. Those great Men amongst the Ancients made excellent Use of the Understanding and Light they enjoyed. But it is worth our while to observe that *Socrates*, whose Discourses *Plato* has transmitted down to us, was so very sensible of the Weakness of unassisted Reason, that he earnestly expresseth his Desire, after some clearer Information, inspired, as it were, from above with the Hopes and Expectation of a divine Messenger. Those Men were so far from being like some of our modern Reasoners, that they would have received with Joy those heavenly Instructions, which these, with equal Folly and Prophaneness, turn their Backs upon. But let us not imitate such vain Disputers of this World,
rather

rather let us act as becomes us, disdain the uncertain Schemes they follow, and steadily proceed on in the Way where Wisdom leads.

One would think, that pathetic and affectionate Manner, with which we are invited in my Text to accept the Salvation offered us, could not fail of drawing us powerfully to it. It is expressed in such Terms as if God was to be the Gainer by it, and not ourselves. *We are Ambassadors for Christ*, saith the Apostle, *as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's Stead; be ye reconciled to God.* As if, indeed, the Breach of Friendship had been on his Part, and not on ours. Whereas the Expostulation of *Elibu*, in the Book of *Job*, may well be applied to us. *If thou sinnest, What dost thou against God?*
Or

Or if thy Transgressions be multiplied, What dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, What givest thou him? Or what receivest he of thine Hand? Thy Wickedness may hurt a Man as thou art, and thy Righteousness may profit the Son of Man. God is never the Better nor the Worse for all we can do. We do but hasten our own Misery, when we offend him; and we are working out our own Salvation, when we be engaged in his Service.

We see, therefore, that really we alone are the Persons concerned in this Invitation to us from God. He has graciously thought fit, indeed, by the Ambassadors of Christ, to call upon, nay, intreat us to be reconciled to him; to forsake the Practice of Vice and Wickedness, so hateful and offensive to him, and enter
upon

upon a virtuous and pious Course of Life, which alone can make us pleasing in his Sight; but we only are to reap the Fruits of our Doings. God is happy in and from himself. From him all other Creatures derive that Share of Happiness they severally enjoy; but none can make any Addition to, or lessen his. And though it be said in the Holy Scripture, *that there is Joy in the Presence of God over one Sinner that repenteth*; yet that we are to understand as spoken after the Manner of Men. He is pleased in those sacred Writings, to stile himself *our Father*, and us his *Children*, and chooseth to speak of himself and us according to those Relations. And agreeably thereto he representeth himself as affected, upon the Conversion of a Sinner, in the same Manner that an earthly indulgent Parent is upon the

the Return of a wild and extravagant Son to himself and his Duty. But we must not, therefore, imagine that he has the same Passions we have, any more than he has Hands and Feet, Mouth and Head, ascribed to him in holy Writ. In all these Cases, he is spoken of in that Manner, in Condescension to our Weakness and Infirmities. For we are so immersed in Matter, that we have no other Idea of a rational Being, but as consisting of like Members, Parts and Passions to ourselves. But thus much we may be assured of, from the Manner of speaking we meet with in those sacred Oracles, that the Wicked shall as certainly be made miserable after Death, as though God were displeased and angry with them; and that the Righteous shall be rendered completely happy,

happy, as if God rejoiced and delighted in them.

But how is this last to be affected? We find ourselves, indeed, capable of the greatest Wretchedness; but of perfect Happiness, as we have no Experience, so we can scarce conceive how, so imperfect a Creature as Man is, can ever enjoy Happiness, without any Interruption or Alloy. The wise Man observes, *that even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of that Mirth is Heaviness*; alluding, it may be, to that usual Effect of it, its ending with a Sigh. *St. John* fully clears this Matter, when he says, that upon our Admission into Heaven, *we shall be like God*: And *St. Paul* assures us, *that as we have borne the Image of the Earthly, we shall also bear the Image of the Heavenly*. Now if we be hereafter

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to be rendered divine and heavenly, there remains no Difficulty of conceiving that our Happiness will be then in its Quality pure and unmixed, in its Measure full and perfect. For as God has none of those Defects, to which good Men in this Life owe those Intermissions of Joy, Peace and Happiness, which they experience, so, when, by being made like unto God, they shall likewise be freed from the same; they will be happy, as he is happy. How ought we then to be affected at these good Tidings. When a Messenger brought us an Account of that glorious Victory, whereby Rebellion received its Death's Wound, and our Peace at Home was restored; how did our Hearts bound with Joy at the Tidings! And when we were assured that all our public Enemies abroad had laid aside all their Designs against us; were
ready

156 S E R M O N XIII.

ready to restore to us all our just Rights and Privileges, and to live with us for the future in perfect Love and Friendship, Did not our Hearts exult at the News? And shall we be less affected at these Tidings of great Joy brought us by the Ambassadors of Christ? In all Reason, surely we should be most rejoiced at these. For how much in earnest and sincere soever, those Potentates may be with whom we have been at War, yet some unforeseen Accidents may quickly set us at Variance again; or other Enemies may arise equally vexatious and dangerous to our Peace and Welfare. But when once we turn unto the Lord, and be reconciled to him, it will then depend upon ourselves alone, with the Divine Grace (which will never be wanting to us, but through our own Fault) to preserve his eternal Love and Favour;

Favour; nothing from without will then be able to deprive us of it.

Such are the Instructions which the Ambassadors of Christ are charged with, How unworthy then of so glorious a Commission will they shew themselves, if leaving such great and precious Promises, they deliver in their Stead, the jejune, dry, barren, and unprofitable Theories of the Schools; the uncertain, uncomfortable Dictates of natural Reason, unassisted by Revelation? Or treating that perfect Rule of Faith and Practice as defective, presumptuously endeavour to add to it their own wild and superstitious Notions! Or impiously imagining some Things in it, because above their Capacities to conceive or comprehend, to be therefore rejected by them, most arrogantly and sacrilegiously cut them off, as unworthy the Reception of such

wife and discerning Men as they take themselves to be! Leaving therefore such as these to the Enjoyment of their own vain and delusive Fancies, let us attend to the Doctrines and Precepts delivered to us from Heaven. Let us gratefully accept of that Tender of Salvation made to us from thence. Now God is graciously pleased to be reconciled to us, and blotting out our past Sins in the Blood of his Son, to receive us again into his Favour; let it be our Care, by our future Conduct, to approve ourselves, as far as we can, worthy that great Mercy vouchsafed unto us: And blessed will be the Event of doing so. For the nearer we approach to the divine Nature in true Purity and Goodness, so much the nearer we shall arrive to his supreme Perfection and Happiness. For nothing can be more certain than this; that to be good, is to be happy.

py. With which Sentence I shall beg Leave to conclude this Discourse, praying unto God, that we may always act, as under the Influence of it; and so doing his Will here, may be made like unto him in perfect Happiness hereafter; even for the Sake of Jesus Christ, our only Redeemer and Saviour, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three Persons and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, throughout all Churches of the Saints, all Love, Honour and Obedience, Dominion and Power, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and through each succeeding Period of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XIV.

The Scorners incapable of true Wisdom.

Preached at St. Peter's Mancroft, Dec.

15, 1747.

Proverbs xiv. 6.

A Scorners seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not. But Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

BY the Word *Wisdom*, in this Book of Proverbs, is usually meant *Religion*; and so we are in my Text to understand it. *A Scorners seeketh after Religion, but findeth not* that which is of God. But what can be the Reason he is thus unfortunate in his Enquiry? *Solomon* had before said, Chap. ii. ver. 1,
&c.

&c. *My Son, if thou incline thine Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thine Heart to Understanding: Yea, if thou criest after Knowledge, and listest up thy Voice for Understanding; then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth Wisdom; out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding. And Jeremiah, from the Mouth of God, saith; Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your Heart, chap. xxix. 13. And St. James i. 5. thus encourageth all Persons: If any of you, saith he, lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Agreeable to what his blessed Master had before said, Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he*

that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. St. Matthew, vii. 8. And as Wisdom is glorious and never fadeth away ; so the wise Man assures us, Wisd. vi. 12, &c. She is easily seen of them that love her, and found of such as seek her. Nay, she preventeth them, that desireth her, in making herself first known unto them. Whoso seeketh her early shall have no great Travel ; for he shall find her sitting at his Doors. For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her ; sheweth herself favourable unto them in the Ways, and meeteth them in every Thought. Whence then comes it to pass, that the Scorners, though he seeketh Wisdom, should yet find her not ? The Reason is but too plain, viz. He is a Scorners : He is proud and self-conceited, and scorns to have his Understanding prescribed to by any Person,
how

S E R M O N XIV. 163

how divinely soever inspired, or even by God himself. He sets up upon his own Stock of Knowledge; and if that be not sufficient to gain him Wisdom, or lead him to the Knowledge of God or his Religion, he disdains all other Information, and will allow or admit of no other Religion, but that of his own framing. He derides every Thing else, though never so sacred and excellent; *even the Things of the Spirit of God are Foolishness unto him, neither can we wonder that he knows them not, because they are spiritually discerned*; because it is by the serious Study of divine Revelation alone, that he can arrive at the Knowledge of them. I say, the serious Study; because there are great many even of these Scorners, who peruse and examine the sacred Writings, but then not from any good Intention. They

are captious Enquirers ; they use Truth to subvert the Truth, and the holy Scriptures to disprove the Scriptures themselves. They do not proceed in their Search after Wisdom, in a due and proper Manner ; or with any pious or good End. Not to bring themselves to obey the Will of God, but as the *Jews* did to *Jeremiah*, when they desired him to pray for them, *that the Lord might shew them the Way wherein they should walk, and the Thing he would have them do.* For upon his Application to God, he found what Hypocrites they were ; that they dissembled in their Hearts, when they sent him unto the Lord his God : being determined in themselves what they would do, whatsoever Answer he should bring them from him, *Jeremiah* xlii. 1—20. So these Scorners read the Scriptures, not with any Design to inform them-

themselves in, or to follow the Will of God, but to try if they can wrest them to such a Sense as may favour their own preconceived Notions they are fond of, or countenance or excuse them in the vicious Practices they are resolved to indulge themselves in: Or as the People who went to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, and set before him, as if they had been the sincere People of God, and heard his Words, as if they intended to observe them. But it was only to please their Ears and gratify their Curiosity. They were delighted with his Manner of teaching; *Thou art unto them, saith God, as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument; for they hear thy Words, but they do them not. For with their Mouths they shew much Love, they pretend great Respect and Regard; but their Hearts go*

after Covetousness. Ezekiel xxxiii. 31, 32.
 So these Scorners read the sacred Writings, not as the Word of God, but as they would any Work of Genius of human Composition that takes their Fancy. They can delight themselves with observing the great Variety of Subjects therein treated of, the sublime Sentiments and elegant Expressions, without admitting one Thought of the divine Author, or having their Affections warmed to a just Admiration of Piety and Virtue.

But there are another Sort of Scorners who are as far from true Wisdom as any of the Former, who pretend, indeed, to be true Believers ; who yet use Religion as a Cloak to put off or on, as Occasion serves. Such as shall, with *Herod*, seem to bear gladly the Preaching of *John the Baptist*

Baptist To-day, and To-morrow sign a Warrant to have him beheaded. Or with that *Herod's* Father, say, *They will worship Christ*, when they purpose in their Hearts to murder him; or with *Judas* betray their Master with a Kiss, with a Semblance of Love and Friendship. Whatever any of these Scorners may think, what Pretensions soever they may make to a greater Sagacity or superior Knowledge to other Men, they are, in Truth, very shallow and weak Men; they want Parts and Capacity to discern the true Religion, and are Strangers to those ravishing Emotions which possess great Minds in performing the Duties of it. For a Sense of Piety, as well as the Sense of any Thing else, is lively and warm in Proportion to the Faculties of the Head and Heart. These Persons may be assured they have

not a Taste for what they pretend thus to decry; and they are certainly more Fools than Atheists. They want Capacity to relish what true Piety is, and are as capable of composing an Heroick Poem, as of making a fervent Prayer. When Men be thus low and narrow in their Apprehensions, and at the same Time vain, they are naturally led to think every Thing they do not understand, not to be therefore understood. Their Contradiction to what is urged by others in Defence of Religion, is the Consequence of their Incapacity to receive it.

But the wise Man in my Text says, *Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.* Now by him that understandeth is meant a Man of an unprejudiced and teachable Disposition; who is always
ready

S E R M O N XIV. 169

ready to receive Truth, and who is so thoroughly sensible of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and of his own Weakness and Imperfection, that in Matters of a divine and religious Nature, he dares not trust to his own Reason and Abilities, but seeketh for Instruction from above; has Recourse to, and resteth in the Revelations which God hath been pleased to give us of himself and of his Will. Indeed he makes use of, as God intended he should, the natural Powers and Faculties he is endowed with, to distinguish between the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error. But when he finds from clear and sufficient Evidence, that which is of God, he holds it fast; he gives up himself entirely to his divine Instructions; to his heavenly Doctrines he assents without Reserve, and forms the Conduct of his

Life

Life according to his Precepts without Exception. God, he is well assured, knows his own Nature best, and he is as sure, that he will not deceive any of his Creatures that believe and put their Confidence in him ; and therefore how impossible soever it may be for him to conceive the Doctrines revealed, or difficult to perform the Duties required by him, he, without Hesitation, believes the former, and chearfully sets about the Performance of the latter. So true is this Observation of the wise Man, that *the Knowledge of divine Things is easy unto him that understandeth* ; to him that has a just Sense of the Wisdom and Goodness of the Almighty.

Goodness and Wisdom are productive of each other. So saith the wise Son of Syrach ; *He that keepeth the Law of the Lord,*

Lord, getteth the Understanding thereof; and the Perfection of the Fear of the Lord is Wisdom. He that is not wise, will not be taught: but if a skilful Man hear a wise Word, he will commend it, and add unto it; he will be yet wiser and increase in Learning. But as soon as one of no Understanding heareth it, it displeaseth him, and he casteth it behind his Back. There must be natural good Sense in the Mind, and a modest Disposition, or divine Truths will be lost upon it; it will have no Taste or Relish for them. For as no Man is able to see or take any Pleasure in the most judicious and beautiful Compositions of the finest Writer, unless he be himself blessed with something of the Author's Genius; so he who has not a Spark of the Divinity within him, is as unable to discern or be influenced by the Doctrines

trines which are from above ; only there is this Difference between these two Cases, that whereas in the former a Man may never be able, through the natural Weakness of his Faculties, or for Want of Instruction, or other proper Means, however desirous he may be, to have a Taste for fine Writing, it is not so with Relation to the latter. For if a Man be but well inclined, and earnestly desires to know and obey the divine Will, however weak his natural Faculties may be, God will come in to his Assistance, supply all his Defects, and open his Understanding that he may understand the Scriptures, agreeably to the following Declaration of our blessed Lord ; *If any Man will do God's Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Whether the Doctrines, I teach, be of divine, or only

only of human Authority, *John* vii. 17. And again, saith he, to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *John* viii. 43. *Why do ye not understand my Speech? Even because you cannot bear my Words*; they agree not with your Tempers and Inclinations. This was eminently seen and verified in the Apostles of our blessed Lord. They were Persons of no Education, of low Stations and mean Employments in Life; but their good Dispositions recommended them in the Sight of God, and he enabled them to perceive and admire the heavenly Doctrines they heard from their blessed Master; whilst the learned Doctors and Rabbies of the *Jews*, through Pride and Self-conceit, and for Want of that necessary previous good Sense, remained altogether ignorant of them, nor were able to discern the divine Original. They were of the Number
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of the Scorners, who seek Wisdom, but find it not. They were in Expectation of the promised *Messiah*; but then as they had formed their Notions of him, not according to the true and genuine Meaning of the ancient Prophecies concerning him, but in a Manner agreeable to their own vain ambitious Fancies, they scorned to receive our blessed Saviour for such; they could not find in their Hearts to submit themselves and become the Disciples of a Person born of such mean Parents, and who was quite destitute of the Attendants, the Power, and Splendor with which they had vainly imagined the *Messiah* was to be accompanied. The pompous Predictions of his spiritual Kingdom they had interpreted all along as relating to a temporal universal Empire he should establish in this World; nor would they pay
any

any Regard to those other Prophecies, which most exactly described the Meanness of his Parentage and Appearance, the Poverty and Afflictions of his Life, the cruel and ignominious Circumstances of his Death. No; not though the blessed Jesus himself plainly shewed and demonstrated to them, how much they were mistaken of the true Sense of the sacred Writings concerning him and his divine Mission, by undoubted Miracles, by Works transcending the Power of all Mortals.

But see the Force of Prejudice. If they had understood the Meaning of those Prophecies, the Knowledge of the *Messiah* had been easy unto them. But they would not give up their own imaginary Interpretations of them, though plainly inconsistent with the whole Tenor of

of them, as taken and compared with one another, nor verified in the Time they themselves expected they should. And yet they could not but see, if they had not wilfully blinded their Eyes, how consistent our blessed Lord's Interpretation made them, and how exactly they all centered in him, at that very Time, when they themselves expected the Appearance of the *Messiah*.

They were mistaken in their Notions of Wisdom. To keep their Stations at least, if not to raise themselves in the World, and preserve their Interest and Veneration amongst the People, was what they looked upon as the truest Wisdom, and therefore they were resolved to reject any religious Scheme that should tend to deprive them of what they valued and set their Hearts so much upon. The
Religion

Religion which Christ came to establish in the World, seemed to be so far from promising any temporal Advantage to those that should embrace it, that the very Professors of it were told, that they must not expect any Thing of that Nature from it ; that on the Contrary, for the Sake of it, they would be exposed to many grievous Calamities and Persecutions, even unto Death : That their Reward was at a Distance, even in Heaven, the Seat and Mansion of the Blessed. This they looked upon as chimerical, a Happiness in the Clouds, not worthy the giving up their present Honours and Possessions for. But here was their Folly : Thus *professing themselves wise, they became Fools*, by refusing to hazard a temporal Advantage, at best but uncertain, for the Sake of an eternal State of Happiness and Glory.

To

To a Man that understandeth the little Proportion there is between Time and Eternity, and the just Weight and Importance of Things; the great Preferableness of an eternal Weight of Glory, to the momentary Enjoyments of this World, instantly appears. This Knowledge is easy unto such an one, though otherwise of the lowest Capacity and Attainments. This requires no great Sagacity to comprehend, but every one that sees how foolishly that Man would act, who, for the Sake of living one Day in great Luxury and Splendor, should expose himself to Want and Misery the remaining Part of his Life, is a proper and adequate Judge of it: For there is a much greater Disproportion between the longest Term of human Life and Eternity, than there is between that and one Day; and he would act much
more

more stupidly, who should, for the Sake of the certain Enjoyment (if it were possible) of the highest Pleasure and Delights of this World, even to the Age of *Methuselah*, deprive himself of everlasting Happiness, and expose himself to endless Misery; than even the oldest Man that ever lived would have done, if he had, for one happy Day, rendered all the Rest of his Life miserably wretched.

And of this the *Infidels* of this present Age, the *Disputers* of this World, the *Scorners who seek after Wisdom, but find it not*, will be convinced, when they come to enter upon an eternal State. Then shall vanish *the Wisdom of the Wise, and the Understanding of the Prudent shall be brought to nothing*. Then will they be forced to see and acknowledge the true
Wisdom,

Wisdom, when it will not profit them, whether they will or not. And be obliged to confess that they *erred from the Way of Truth*, and that the Light of Righteousness did not shine, nor the Sun of Righteousness rise upon them. Then will they complain, saying, as the wise Man representeth them: “ We wearied
 “ ourselves in the Way of Wickedness
 “ and Destruction; yea, we have gone
 “ through Deserts, where there lay no
 “ Way; but as for the Way of the
 “ Lord, we have not known it. We set
 “ at nought all his Counsels; we would
 “ have none of his Reproof: What now,
 “ alas! hath Pride profited us? Or,
 “ What good hath Riches, with our Va-
 “ nity, brought us? All those Things
 “ are passed away as a Shadow, and
 “ as a Post that hasteth by. While the
 “ Righteous whom we had sometime
 in

“ in Derision and a Proverb of Re-
 “ proach; whose Life we Fools account-
 “ ed Madnefs, and his End to be with-
 “ out Honour: Now is he numbered
 “ among the Children of God, and his
 “ Lot is among the Saints. He lives
 “ for evermore; his Reward is with the
 “ Lord, and the Care of him is with
 “ the moft High. Behold he receives
 “ a glorious Kingdom, and a beautiful
 “ Crown from the Lord’s Hand: He is
 “ placed out of all Danger: For God’s
 “ right Hand covers him, and his Arm
 “ it is that protecteth him.” Whilst the
 Scorners be seeking Wisdom, where
 ſhe is not to be found, let us apply our-
 ſelves to her in the Holy Scriptures,
 where ſhe dwelleth in the Brightnefs of
 everlaſting Light. He that looketh
 for her in human Knowledge, will find
 himſelf fatally diſappointed, and his En-

quiry will end in Vexation of Spirit; but as she is displayed in the sacred Writings, her Conversation hath no Bitterness, and to live with her hath no Sorrow, but on the Contrary, Mirth and Joy always attend her. Moreover, by the Means of her we shall obtain immortal Happiness; with her *are the Words of eternal Life*. It is absurd, and will be as fruitless to search for this heavenly Wisdom by the common Ways of Enquiry in other Matters, as it would be to endeavour to make ourselves Masters of any human Science, by reading only Books upon Subjects the most foreign to it. I am very far from being of their Opinion, who either decry human Learning in general, or make it such a *Moa-bite* or *Ammorite*, that however it be admitted in civil Affairs, it should be forbidden the Sanctuary. No: Our Religion prescribes

prescribes us *rational*, not *brutish* Sacrifices, and therefore rejects not any of those Advantages which may improve our Reason, may exalt the Man, and depress the Beast in us. But can we therefore think it right that divine Learning should be brought down to human; or that *Plato* or *Aristotle* should be made the Umpires of our Religion; and we should have Recourse to *Heathens*, to know how far we shall be Christians. Surely we shall derogate very impiously from Christ's prophetic Office, if we allow not Divinity to be the supreme and noblest Science, such as is to be served and attended, not regulated and governed by those inferior.

Those *wise Heathens* were sensible enough of their Want of a superior

Guide in Matters of a religious and divine Nature, and, often in their Writings express their Wishes for such an one. And had the Revelations of the divine Nature and Will come to their Knowledge, they would have had Recourse to no other Means for Information on such Topics. They would have rejoiced at beholding the divine Nature and Attributes in those sacred Writings set forth and displayed in their just Majesty and Splendor; the dark and intricate Passages of God's Providence explained and cleared up to their Satisfaction, and the Manifestation of his perfect Wisdom and Goodness; and with Admiration and Gratitude have considered that Instance of his transcendent Love and Affection for us his Creatures, in the Redemption of Mankind, by the Death of his eternal and only-

only-begotten Son, our blessed Lord and Saviour. They were not like the Scorners of the present Age, proud and self-conceited, who think nothing worthy their Notice, that is not really above their Capacities. But they were Men of Goodness and clear Judgments, and restrained and kept their Reason within its proper Bounds. The Mysteries of our Religion would, as the all-wise Revealer intended they should, have remained Mysteries; nor would they have been so foolish as to have attempted, with the Plummit of their finite Understandings, to have fathomed infinite Wisdom; or with their weak and narrow Faculties expected to have comprehended the infinite boundless Perfections of their great Creator.

Our modern Infidels will sometimes pretend to call those great Men of old their Masters, and highly to admire and esteem them, though some of them scarce know in what Language they wrote. But why then do they not imitate them in their modest and judicious Methods of Reasoning, and as they did, keep within their proper Sphere? and then such Knowledge as they are capable of, and is profitable to them, would be easy unto them.

But whether they will do so or not, let us not *set with them in the Seat of the Scornful*, but receive with Thankfulness that Degree of Wisdom and Knowledge which God has been pleased to reveal to us; nor pretend to be wise above what is written; but upon his divine Authority, give our Assent to the sublime

S E R M O N XIV. 187

lime and heavenly Doctrines of the Gospel; and make the Precepts therein given us, the Rules of our Conduct; for this will be our Wisdom and Understanding. Hereby we shall approve ourselves in the Sight of God, faithful and obedient Christians, and qualify ourselves for that eternal State of Bliss and Happiness, which he has prepared for all good and pious Believers in the Regions of the Blessed. Which, that it may be the final Portion of every one of us, God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake and Merits of our blessed Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ: To whom, Father and Son, together with the Holy Ghost, the adorable Trinity in the ever-blessed and undivded Unity, be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us and all Men, all Love, Honour and Obedience, Might, Majesty, and Domi-

nion, Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiving, both now, and through each succeeding Period of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R-

S E R M O N XV.

On *Abraham's* offering up his Son *Isaac*.

Preached at *St. Peter's Mancroft*, the
12th Day of *January*, and at *St.*
John's Maddermarket, the 28th of
Feb. 1747-8.

Hebrews xi. 17, 18, 19. ✓

By Faith *Abraham*, when he was tried, offered up *Isaac*; and he that had received the Promises, offered up his only-begotten Son: Of whom it was said, that in *Isaac* shall thy Seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead; from whence also he had received him in a Figure.

TO understand the great Merit of this Action of *Abraham*, here commemorated and applauded by the

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Apostles,

Apostles, and the true Worth of that great Man so highly and deservedly celebrated in all Ages, it will be necessary to look back to the History thereof, as we have it given us by *Moses*, in the 22d Chapter of *Genesis*. *Isaac* was then twenty-five Years old, *Abraham's* only Child, As he was remarkable for his Piety towards God, so was he no less for his exact Observance of his Duty to his Parents; so that we may well imagine he was exceedingly dear unto them. Having therefore so worthy a Person to succeed him in his Fortunes, *Abraham* might well think of his own approaching Dissolution with Pleasure and Satisfaction.

But now, in the Midst of these pleasing Reflections, God requires him to offer up this his beloved Son to him in
Sacrifice

S E R M O N XV. 191

Sacrifice, of whom he had received the Promise, *that in Isaac should his Seed be called, and that in his Seed should all Nations of the Earth be blessed.*

Who amongst the Sons of Men would not have been exceedingly shocked at such a Command, that at once bore so hard upon the tenderest Affections of a most indulgent Parent, and seemed to contradict and render vain all God's former Promises. As to the latter, the Apostle indeed representeth him as reasoning after this Manner: That as the Birth of *Isaac* was entirely out of the common Course of Nature, so it might please God to restore him again in some miraculous Manner; accounting, as the Apostle expresseth it, *that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead, from whence*

whence also he had received him in a Figure; at a Time when it was as unlikely he should have a Son, as that that Son should be restored to Life again, after he should be sacrificed. But as to all other Considerations, we find they had no Weight with him.

The Command he received in the Night without any Hesitation or Murmuring, he arose up early in the Morning to execute; and from a Sense of his Duty to God, had such a Command over his Passions, as to be able to use the Art and Address that were necessary to prevent his Purpose from being discovered, and the Tears and Remonstrances of his Wife and Family, which a Discovery thereof, he well knew, would necessarily occasion.

There-

There are some Particulars in the Command itself, which deserve every one of them a distinct Consideration, and are therefore exactly related, by the divine Historian, as setting forth in the clearest Light, the true Merit of this great Patriarch's ready Obedience. *Take now thy Son, says God*; no Time, we may observe, is given him for Consideration and Reflection; no Time to conquer his Passions, to subdue the natural Affections and Yearnings of a Parent to his Child, but he must set about it as soon as the Morning should appear. And he was not to commit this melancholy Office to another, but he must set about it and perform it all himself. He himself must provide every Thing for the Sacrifice; he must erect the Altar, lay the Wood in Order; or what was still more shocking, make his Son assist-

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ing to his own Sacrifice. He it was that must bind his Son, that must plunge his Knife into his Bosom, and divide and place in Order the several Parts of his Body, as the Rites of the Sacrifice required. How do the Heathens extol and magnify some of their ancient Heroes (which perhaps at last are nothing but fabulous) What Panegyrics have they made upon them, for giving up a Child to be sacrificed to appease the Anger of their Gods? But with what Reluctance did they always do it? With what great Difficulty were they brought to consent to it? And at last, not without giving just Suspicion of their being prevailed upon by the Apprehension of Force from their Fellow-Subjects, if they should have persisted in their Refusal. But who amongst them was ever heard of performing
himself

himself the Office in the Sacrifice that *Abraham* set about in this; or if they were present, how did they turn their Eyes from a Scene so full of Horror! They must never therefore, upon any Account, be put in Competition with this of *Abraham*. But further, *Isaac* was not only his Son, *but his only Son*; if he had had many Children, the Loss of one had been more tolerable; but to have *one* Son, *one* Child *only*, and to be required to give him up to Death, and to have all his Hopes of a Posterity frustrated at once; of a Posterity *in whom all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, how grievous, how tormenting must it be to the Mind of a Parent!

But that God might try him to the utmost, and approve his Obedience and Submission to the divine Will, to him-
self

self and all succeeding Generations, he adds this Circumstance, *Thy Son whom thou lovest*. Many Instances there have been in the World, where a Man has had but one Son, who yet has behaved so undutifully and unworthily, as to have been rather the Object of his Father's Shame and Grief, than of his Love and Affection, and the Loss of such a Son may be easily submitted to. But *Isaac* was upon every Account dear to his Father. He was of a sweet and engaging Disposition; who upon all Occasions testified an unreserved Duty and Respect to his aged Parents. He was the Child moreover of *Abraham's old Age*; a Blessing he had miraculously received from Heaven, and a singular Instance of God's especial Kindness and Affection for himself. The Hebrew is still more emphatical; what is here translated

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lated *whom thou lovest*, is in the Original, *whom thou hast loved*, which, according to the Idiom of that Language, signifies a great Deal more than barely thou lovest. For it denotes the Constancy and Uninterruption of that Passion; it is as much as if he had said, *whom thou hast always loved*. It shews that *Isaac* had never once grieved or offended his Father. A like Expression it is to that of *St. John*; *In the Beginning was the Word*; that is, *the Word was always*. And to that in the first Psalm, *Blessed is the Man that hath not walked in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor stood in the Way of Sinners, and hath not sat in the Chair of the Scornful*; that is, *hath never walked, hath never stood, hath never sat*: and so likewise we are to understand this Expression, *whom thou lovest*; that is, *whom to this Day thou hast always loved,*

loved, without any Interruption, or Diminution of Affection. But there is one Thing further we may still observe, which must add, if possible, still greater Sharpness to the Command ; God seems not to have thought it enough to say, *Take now thy Son, thine only Son whom thou lovest*, but he adds his Name too, *thine only Son, Isaac, whom thou lovest*. A Name that as in its own proper Signification it denoted *Laughter and Joy*, so we may be sure it was never heard or repeated by *Abraham* without great Pleasure and Delight. How grievous then must the hearing that Name now repeated needs be, upon an Occasion that was to deprive him at once of all his former Joy and Comfort ! That Name which used, upon being mentioned to him, to bring with it a long Train of pleasing and delightful Ideas, must now
surely

surely pierce his Heart with as many sharp and painful ones.

I have already taken Notice of his not only being to be slain by *Abraham*, but also of the other shocking Circumstances which attended his being to be made a Burnt-Offering. Circumstances so full of Horror in themselves, and to a Parent to particularly such, that I need say no more concerning them: What has been already observed upon that Point is sufficient to shew how superlatively shocking the very Thought thereof must needs be to so tender, so indulgent a Parent. It must have been a strong Faith indeed that could have supported this good Man under these various Temptations, for such we may very well reckon these to be; especially if we consider the Time his Passions had

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to work upon him in the three Days between his first setting out, and the Execution of what was required. For, as his immediate addressing himself at first to perform what God had ordered him, was an evident Token of his unreserved Obedience to the Commands of God; so was his preserving therein to the last a sure Testimony of his Steadiness therein; that no Consideration whatsoever was able to make him stagger in his Faith, or desist from doing what his God required of him. For there were many endearing Circumstances no doubt happened in their long Journey; many Topics of Discourse arose between him and his Son, which the more they shewed *Isaac's* good Sense, Duty to himself, and Piety towards God, made the Thoughts of parting with him so soon the more afflicting and tormenting.

But

But when, upon the third Day, they were come in Sight of the Place, and all other Things being provided, his Son put this innocent Question to him, *Behold, the Fire and the Wood, but where is the Lamb for the Burnt-offering?* How must such his unsuspecting Curiosity pierce him to the Heart! Nothing but the Heart can be a Comment on these Words. ONE must be a *Father*; HE must be a *tender Father*; HE must have an *only Son*; HE must suppose himself deliberately preparing to slay him, in Order to be truly sensible of the pathetic Energy of this Question, and the Impression it made in the Soul of ABRAHAM. Nothing surely could wound him more, unless it were the ready and dutiful Compliance of *Isaac*, when he came to disclose to him the Purpose of their Journey. Yet nothing of all this could

could make this great and good Man in the least shrink from what he knew was his Duty; but *being strong in Faith* he gave Glory to God, by one of the most wonderful Acts of Obedience, that was exacted from any of the Sons of Men.

I know it has been Matter of great Doubt and Dispute amongst some Men, how *Abraham* could be certain that this was God's Command to him, and not rather suspect it to have been an Illusion of the Devil. Nay to such a Pitch of Impiety have some proceeded, as to declare he could have no sufficient Reason to believe it to be a Command of God; but that it was in itself an Act so barbarous and unnatural, so directly contrary to the eternal and necessary Differences of Things, and the natural Notions we have implanted in us of Right and

and Wrong, that he could not possibly be so certain that this was required of him by God, as he was sure it was contrary to the eternal Reason and Nature of Things; and that therefore he did wrong in what we thus applaud him for: Nay; that the Action would have been abominable in the Eyes both of God and Man. But what Insolence, what Impiety is this, to set up their shallow Reason against the Oracles of God? To dare thus to find Fault with and censure an Action so highly commended by the Spirit of God himself; and recommended to the Applause and Imitation of all succeeding Generations, both in the Old and New Testament. To deny that God could not make his Will known to *Abraham*, is denying him the Power which every one of us have with Respect to each other, and is taking away

away, as much as in them lies, all the Foundation or Possibility of a divine Revelation. For, if God could not make *Abraham* certain that this Command came from him, how could any Prophet or inspired Writer ever be sure that he was moved by the Divine Spirit, and consequently what Reason could any of us ever have to pay any Regard to his Revelation. Doubtless he that brought us into Being at first, and placed in us those natural Notions we have of Good and Evil, can, if he please, make his Will known to us in Ways more extraordinary. He can affect and enlighten our Minds in such a Manner, and make us so certain of any Command that he thinks fit to lay upon us, that we shall have no Doubt at all of its coming from him; nay, that we shall be equally, if not more certain of it, than

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than we are of any Law enjoined by our Sovereign.

It is said, indeed, that this Action required of *Abraham* was most abominable and execrable in its own Nature. But herein it is necessary we should distinguish between what is required by God, the Author of all created Beings, and what a Man should do of his own proper Motion. It were, in Truth, a most execrable and abominable Action, for any Man of his own Accord to take his innocent Son, murder him with his own Hands, and offer him up in Sacrifice to God, because he has no such Power given him by his Creator over his Child. But who can be so senseless, as well as impious, to imagine that God Almighty, who first brought us into Being, and was the Author of our Lives,

cannot justly demand them again, when and in what Manner he thinks fit; and authorise and oblige any of his Creatures to be the Executioners of his Will in such Cases. We may as well say, that God acts unjustly, whenever he takes away any Child or other innocent Person before the usual Term of our Lives; especially if he suffer the Dissolution of such Persons to be brought about by the Hand of Violence, or slow torturing Diseases. For with Respect to God the Case is the same, as well with Regard to what he suffers, as what he commands to be done: Since his Power to prevent is equal in both Cases. Not that the Agents, in such Cases, who commit such enormous Actions, are ever the less criminal or guilty; because they have no Authority for what they in this Manner perpetrate; nay, act directly

directly therein contrary to the known Prohibitions and Laws both of God and Man. But the Truth is, God is not unjust in either, and doubtless has always wise and good Ends in View whenever he commands or suffers any such Things. And this *Abraham* well knew. This was not the first Time that God had made himself known to him. The holy Scriptures give us an Account of nine Times in which God had manifested himself to him, before this we are now considering; and he did, it is probable, oftener, though the divine Historian mentions only these, as being all the Instances that were necessary to be transmitted to Posterity.

When *Abram* was settled with his Family in *Haran*, upon God's Command, he left his Country, his Kindred, and his

Father's House, and went and dwelt in a strange Land, to which God had directed him, when he was seventy-five Years old. Now is it at all probable, that so prudent a Man as *Abraham* was, would ever have acted so at that Age, if he had not been well assured, it was the divine Will that he should?

After this, it is said, *The Word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a Vision*; that is, God appeared to him and talked with him. It is an Hebraism like that very frequent in the Prophets; *The Word of the Lord came to Hosea, Isaiab, Jeremiah, &c.* For a Revelation divinely made to the Prophets, is called the *Word*, and a *Vision*: The *Word* because of God's revealing it, and by thus revealing it, talking as it were with the Prophet; and it is called a *Vision* upon
Account

Account of the Prophet himself seeing with the Eyes of his Mind, illuminated by the divine Light, what God is pleased to reveal to him. For as the Sense of seeing excels all the other Senses in its clear and certain Reception of Knowledge, so the Foreknowledge of Things to come, with which God illuminates and teaches the Mind of the Prophet, is therefore called a *Vision*, and the Prophets themselves *Seers*; upon Account of the Clearness and Certainty of that Knowledge inspired or put into their Minds by God. Again, when *Abram* was ninety Years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, *I am the Almighty God; walk before me; and be thou perfect. And I will make my Covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.* And that this was some glorious sensible Appearance

in which he manifested himself to him, is sufficiently clear from this Circumstance, particularly recorded by the divine Historian ; namely, *that Abram fell upon his Face, whilst God thus talked with him.* Then it was that God changed his Name from *Abram* to *Abraham*, and instituted Circumcision. And we may be well assured, that *Abraham* would not have submitted to a Rite so inconvenient, hazardous, and painful at that Age, if he had not been undoubtedly certain, that it was his God who commanded it. He had, moreover, experienced the Truth of what God had foretold and promised : First, in the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and then in his having a Son born to him when he was an hundred Years old, and his Wife ninety ; both evident Proofs of a divine Interposition, besides many
other

other Instances confirming the same grand Truth, which we may very reasonably suppose God had afforded him in the Course of his Life. So that when God came to make this last Trial of his Faith and Obedience, how grievous and shocking soever it might be to him, yet as he well knew that it came from God (and we have seen that he was not to be deceived in that Respect) he knew likewise that he was not to hesitate, but set about the Performance of it immediately, leaving the Event and Issue of it to his blessed Will.

He had had many Instances of his Creator's great Goodness and Mercy towards him, and his Faith would not therefore give him Leave in the least to doubt, but that this Trial, as severe as it was, would end happily at last. It

was an Act indeed that he must not have thought of to recommend himself to God's Favour by, without his especial Direction and Command ; but he could not doubt but the Author of Life might demand it again, when and in what Manner he thought good, and that he, his Creature, had nothing to do but to submit and obey. *Isaac* was indeed a virtuous and religious young Man ; but the depriving a Man of Life before his Time, though by the Hand of Violence, was no certain Sign of the divine Displeasure. *The Righteous are, many Times, taken away from the Evil to come.* And *Abraham* was not to learn, that God foresaw every Thing that could happen : and as he was good and gracious, he could not doubt but this would appear at the last to be best both for himself and *Isaac*. Add to all this, he remembered

bered he had promised, that *in Isaac should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, and he was sure he would not suffer his Word to fail; and however, in all human Appearance this rendered the Accomplishment thereof impossible, yet he wisely considered he had to do with the Almighty, who, if he should suffer him to execute what he had then required of him, though he should offer him up in Sacrifice, and the Fire should consume him, yet *he was able to raise him again from the Dead*, and restore him to Life. He had experienced an Event full as wonderful; and almost of the same Kind with this, which he knew to be possible to God, and which he had therefore great Reason to hope for. The raising him from the Dead was no more difficult to infinite Power, than raising him from a Womb barren.

first, and then by the Course of Nature, long past the Power of Conception. And thus the Apostle speaks of it, *Rom. iv. 17. Abraham believed God, who quickeneth the Dead, and calleth Things which are not, as if they were, who against hope; that is, without any Hope, which the natural Course of Things could give, did in hope believe, that he might become the Father of many Nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy Seed be. And being not weak in Faith, he considered not his own Body now dead, when he were about an hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of Sarah's Womb; where the Apostle lets us into the Sense of those Words, from whence also he received him in a Figure, plainly making them refer to that miraculous Birth of Isaac, when his Parents were past the Age of having Children; that*

that being little, if at all less extraordinary or difficult than a Resurrection from the Dead, and might indeed be figuratively so called.

But, lastly, that which will further clear this Matter to us (if yet it can want any further Clearing) is that Expression of our blessed Saviour, *Abraham rejoiced to see my Day, and he saw it and was glad*; alluding to this very Transaction we are now treating of. For God, in those first Ages, frequently made use of Signs and Actions, to presignify to them future Events, as he did afterwards to his Servants the Prophets. And therefore *Abraham* might well hope for something of that Nature now concerning the *promised Seed*; and we find, that he was not disappointed in his Expectation. For in this Sacrifice of *Isaac*

261 S E R M O N X V.

himself upon the Altar, God acquainted him by that Type with that great Sacrifice, which our blessed Saviour was in future Time to offer himself for the Redemption of Mankind; and by *Isaac's* being delivered, he foresaw our blessed Saviour's Resurrection, made known to him thereby. This was *his rejoicing to see the Day of our Lord*. For this *his Heart was glad, and his Glory rejoiced*. Here did he foresee fulfilled that gracious Promise of God to him, *that in him all Nations of the Earth should be blessed*. Hence he had Assurance of a future Resurrection to himself; and all the pleasing Expectations of a future State of Bliss and Happiness confirmed to him and his Posterity. This was that *Parabolè*, that Parable, Sign, or Representation of *Christ's* Resurrection, that something else was to him before of the
future

future Birth of *Isaac*, which our Apostle in my Text alluded to, when he said, *he received him in a Parable or Sign*, or, as our Translation has it, *in a Figure*.

And now, upon the Whole, I hope, it plainly appears, that *Abraham's* Faith and Obedience in offering up his Son *Isaac* upon the Command of God, was as reasonable and worthy that great Man, as it was extraordinary and eminent. God saw the inward Goodness and Piety of his Heart. *I know him*, says God, himself, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they being influenced by his pious Instructions and Example, shall keep the Way of the Lord to do Justice and Judgment*. But this did not satisfy the Almighty: He would not suffer a Man so entirely good and virtuous should pass through this

this Life without having his great Merit transmitted to Posterity. He therefore made this Trial of him, to crown him with Immortality, even in this Life. And though, upon *Abraham's* ready and entire Resignation of himself to his Will and Pleasure, he says, *Now I know, that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.* Yet, that we must understand as spoken after the Manner of Men ; not that God wanted to see and satisfy himself how *Abraham* would act upon such an Emergency ; for nothing is more certain than that God foreknows whatever can or will happen ; but it is, as if he had said, “ By a Trial of which all Mankind are
“ able to judge. I have evidenced to
“ all the World the great Faith, Virtue,
“ and unreserved Obedience of my Ser-
“ vant *Abraham*, I have hereby shewn,
“ how

" how worthy my especial Love and
 " Favour he is, and how pleasing all
 " the future Sons and Daughters of
 " of Mankind will be to me, who shall
 " tread in his Steps and follow his
 " Example."

This then is the grand Use we should
 make of the Consideration of the Faith
 and Obedience of this eminent and ex-
 traordinary Patriarch, in thus offering
 up *his Son, his only Son* in Sacrifice to
 God, of whom it was said, *that in Isaac*
should his Seed be called. We are, after
 his Example, to submit our Wills to
 the Will of God without Reserve. And
 what Afflictions or Misfortunes soever
 he pleaseth to try us with, we are
 to endure them with Patience, never
 repining or thinking any of God's
 Judgments hard or severe, much less
 unequal

unequal or unjust. Whenever we be under any very grievous Calamity or Misfortune, let us but recollect and compare our Case with that of *Abraham*. *He was a perfect and an upright Man, one that feared and eschewed Evil* ; so highly eminent for his Piety and Virtue, and approved of in the Sight of his Creator, that he has that high Title, given him in the sacred Writings, of being *the Friend of God, and Father of the Faithful*, and celebrated as such both in the Old and New Testament. And yet we see with what a severe Trial was God pleased to prove him ! But how differently alas ! must the best of us speak of ourselves ! How many have been our Sins and Provocations ! How weak is our Faith ! How few and imperfect our Acts of Piety and Obedience ! And shall we then dare to repine at, or think

S E R M O N XV. 222

too hard for us, any Afflictions or calamitous Circumstances, God may be pleased to try us with. What God required of *Abraham* was an Act so unusual, attended with such shocking Circumstances, so contrary to what he was wont to command, that which of us would not have been apt to have expostulated with God upon it; nay, how many are there in this degenerate Age, who not only impiously blame him for doing so, but most blasphemously condemn an Action which they see approved of and applauded by the Creator himself, in the sacred Writings. I hope there are none of us will hearken to such Wretches, but, as right and good Reason teacheth firmly to believe that be right which God commandeth and approveth of; and under all our Afflictions, as our most holy Church

piously

piously directeth, be fully persuaded in our Minds, that they are certainly God's Visitation. And for what Cause soever they are sent unto us, whether it be to try our Patience, for the Example of others, and that our Faith may be found in the Day of the Lord, laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the Increase of Glory and endless Felicity: Or else they be sent unto us to correct and amend in us whatsoever doth offend the Eyes of our heavenly Father; we are certainly to know and assure ourselves, that if we truly repent us of our Sins, and bear our Afflictions patiently, trusting in God's Mercy for his dear Son Jesus Christ's Sake, and render unto him humble Thanks for his fatherly Visitation, submitting wholly to his most blessed Will, they shall turn to our Profit and help us forward in the
right

right Way that leadeth unto everlasting Life. To which End do thou, O most gracious God, who governest the World with infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men; teach us contentedly to submit to the Dispensations of thy Providence, how repugnant soever they may be to Flesh and Blood. Thou knowest the surest Ways of making us happy, and art infinite in Loving-kindness and Mercy. Therefore let thy blessed Will in every Thing be our Choice, our Satisfaction, that so we may serve thee quietly with a devout Mind, and in thy due Time be made Partakers of thy everlasting Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and only Saviour, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most justly due,
of

of us and all Men, all dutiful Obedience and Submission, all Honour, Dominion and Power, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and throughout each succeeding Period of Time to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XVI.

The great Wisdom of moderating our
Passions.

Preached at St. John's Maddermarket,
Dec. 7, 1746. and at St. Peter's Man-
croft, Sept. 6, 1747.

Proverbs xvi. 32.

*He that is slow to Anger, is better than the
Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit,
than he that taketh a City.*

O F all human Virtues, Fortitude or
Bravery is that which is attended
with the greatest Applause amongst
Men : For we meet with none so much
celebrated, as those who have distin-
guished themselves in the Field of Bat-
tle,

tle, and subdued Cities and Kingdoms. And yet we find that, in the Judgment of this wisest amongst the Sons of Men, he that can keep that one Passion of his Soul, that powerful Impulse of the Mind, which we call *Anger*, in due Bounds, is greater and more valuable in the Sight of God, and the most judicious of Men, than even that Idol of popular Applause, so much admired and extolled. *Alexander*, falsely surnamed *the Great*, from an Application of extraordinary Abilities to the Plague and Disturbance of Mankind, conquered almost all the then known World, yet was himself a Slave to the Passion and Fury of his own Mind, with which he was frequently transported to such a Degree, that he murdered with his own Hands, some of his most faithful and best beloved Friends. He found it much easier
to.

to overcome Cities and Dominions, than to rule his own Spirit. And when we compare a Man, *who is slow to Anger*, and always Master of himself, with that renowned Warrior, who is there of us who does not in his own Mind, prefer the former to the latter? We do indeed but shew our Wisdom by such a Judgment, since it is agreeable to what the Spirit of God himself declares by the Mouth of *Solomon* in my Text: *He that is slow to Anger is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

Without examining further what Reasons there may be, why the one of these is preferred before the other (as being an Enquiry unnecessary in this Audience) we will consider the Nature of this Passion, and how much it concerns us all to re-
strain

strain it, and keep it within due Bounds. *Anger* then is that Uneasiness or Discomposure of the Mind, which it is affected with, upon the Receipt of any supposed or real Injury, with a present Purpose of Revenge: When a Man be strongly under its Influence, he is said to be in a *Passion*; as if this indeed contained all the Evil of other *Passions* within it, and this were *Passion* itself; *Passion* emphatically so called. And truly, not improperly. It is no small Degree of Madness; it deprives a Man of his Reason; it spoils his Understanding, and for the Time renders him a very Fool. However, in this refined Age, we have brought our Reason, and that, even retaining its whole Force, calmly to follow the Dictates of this *Passion*; as foolish and mad as it is confessed to be, even to Death. Thus, has any Man affronted

fronted or injured us, what will the most sober, discreet, well-bred Man advise us to do? Forgive him, or pass by the Injury or Affront? No, by no Means; we should then be utterly undone in our Characters, and lost in our Reputation with the World. Well then, what is to be done? Why, if we follow the present Mode, we must not let our Heart take Rest, we must lay aside all other Business and Employment, till we have the Blood of our Enemy, though perhaps in every other Respect, he has been our dearest, best beloved Friend. How! A Man's Blood! My Friend's Life for an injurious, passionate Speech; for a disdainful Look, for an Offence which, it may be, an

Enemy to us both, is the only Inventor or Cause thereof. Nay, this is not all; that you may gain among

Men the Reputation of a discreet, well-tempered Murderer, you must be sure not to kill him in Passion, when your Blood be hot and boiling with the Provocation; but you must proceed with as great Temper and Sedateness, with as much Discretion and Composure of Mind, as you would to the Performance of the most solemn and important Duty. After a Respite of some Days, some Months, nay, perhaps some Years, that it may appear it is thy Reason which guides thee, and not thy Passion; you must invite him mildly and courteously into some retired Place, and there let it be determined, whether his Blood or your's shall satisfy the Injury. It is difficult to determine, which is the greatest, the Impiety or Folly of such a Procedure. Because I think a Man has injured me, therefore I must put it
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in his Power, upon an equal Chance, to take away my Life too. Is there any Folly comparable to this? And yet this is what Gentlemen, what Persons of the best Education and Understanding, nay, what Christians give into, from a Notion of Honour, which no Man has hitherto ever been able to make consistent with Reason, with common Sense, or with Religion. To our Shame be it spoken, it is a Practice prevailing only amongst Christians. The *Heathens* disclaim it. The *Mahometans* declare, they are not guilty of it. Forgiveness of Injuries is a Precept upon the Performance of which our blessed Saviour has laid a more than ordinary Stress: And yet he that is determined to obey this Commandment of his Lord, runs the Risk of falling into Contempt and Disgrace with the World. It is much

to be lamented indeed, that the World should be so generally corrupted in its Notions; that such should be the Event. But let us consider, which is in the right, and which it is most incumbent upon us to please. Who was it that brought us into Being? Was it the World or ourselves?—Neither. Who was it then? It was God. And who then, do we think, has a Right to our Lives, and to dispose of them as he pleases, but that God, who was the Author of them? And therefore we most certainly break in upon that Right, when we destroy them ourselves, or unnecessarily expose them to Danger from others. And we, who value ourselves upon our Honour, and a strict Regard to Justice, do therein a most unjust and dishonourable Action. Whereas when we pass by or forgive an Injury, we do, what
every

every wise Man will tell us, argues a truly brave and noble Spirit. We gain a Conquest over ourselves, which, as we find it attended with great Difficulty from within, is so much the more glorious and praise-worthy.

Again : Let us compare the supposed Disgrace and Contempt which we imagine we shall suffer from the World, with those evils which we shall most certainly expose ourselves to by complying with a Custom which runs quite counter to the undoubted Principles of Reason and Religion. Now what is it which makes Contempt or Disgrace so great an Evil, but something done, by the Person who falls under it, that is base or unworthy in itself. And can a Man be said to be guilty of any Thing so unworthy or base, by refusing to

comply with a Challenge sent him, or neglecting to send one himself; when he must thereby offend a plain Prohibition of his God, and dispatch his Neighbour's Soul, or his own; or perhaps both, clogged and oppressed with all their Sins unrepented of (for how can Repentance possibly consist with such a Resolution) before the Tribunal Seat of Christ, to expect the final Sentence, utterly deprived of all the blessed Means, which God has contrived for our Salvation, and put in such an Estate, that it shall not be in God's Power, almost consistently with the Terms of the Gospel, to do them any good? Surely this Representation of the Case must make any Man of Sense, who is a Christian, rather disregard and despise such imaginary Contempt and Disgrace, than to
avoid

avoid them, plunge himself into such wretched and deplorable Circumstances.

But enough of this, and perhaps I have said more than was necessary in a Case so plain and clear to every considerate Man and true Christian; especially in this Audience, none of whom its likely will ever be in Danger of falling into this Error. But I hope you will excuse my Zeal in an Affair that so apparently breaks in upon the Laws both of God and Man, and so dangerous to the Souls of many, in every other Respect very worthy and valuable Men, and who ought not so slightly to deprive the Community of such able and necessary Members. For though you may find what has been said upon this Subject unnecessary to yourselves, yet it may suggest to you some Hints proper to

give others you may possibly happen to be acquainted with. At least it may be admitted as my Apology, that in treating of this Passion, so fatal an Effect of it could not so well be omitted or overlooked. However, I shall now apply myself to what may more immediately concern us. This Passion of Anger we are all of us more or less subject to; and though indeed it be not so generally fatal in its Effects amongst us, as we have seen it in the former Case, yet very many and great are the Evils, which arise from it commonly: We will consider some of them. In what continual Labour and Uneasiness may we observe those Persons to be, who are greatly subject to it, and who take no Pains to restrain it. Every, the least Thing which happens contrary to their Humours (and that very wayward Humour

mour causes many such Things to happen) ruffles their Minds, and makes them so entirely unable to command themselves, that whilst they are the Objects of the Mirth or Pity of the Persons they are angry with, they are a most grievous Torment to themselves. And of what Benefit or Service is, at last, all this Commotion and Agitation of Spirits? The offending Party will be more likely to ascribe their Anger or Displeasure to a natural fretful or uneasy Temper, than to any just Cause he has given. For he who is at any Time more angry than the Case seemed to require, will quickly be thought to have had no sufficient Cause for being offended at all, even when there be but too just Occasion for it. And they who have been worse treated than they know they have merited, will soon become less

careful of their Behaviour, and even not be solicitous whether they deserve so well for the future as they have done. Whereas when People be talk'd to calmly for their Faults, they are as readily inclined to hearken to Advice, and then look upon themselves as obliged to reform what is amiss, when they be spoken to in so mild and friendly a Manner. The Master is then look'd upon as a Friend, and his Admonition is accordingly received with a becoming Deference and Respect.

However Anger may possibly glance into the Breast of a wise Man, yet, as *Solomon* observes, *it resteth only in the Bosom of Fools*. Some Persons are above our Anger, others below it. To contend with our Superiors is Indiscretion, and with our Inferiors an Indignity. To
shew

shew our Resentment to the former
 is only exposing ourselves to greater In-
 juries, and worse Treatment; and as to
 the latter, it is but Charity and com-
 mon Humanity, kindly to inform them
 of their Errors, and set them right.
 By these Means we shall overcome
 both, and procure their Love and
 Affection: For none can bear Ill-will
 long to those who do not oppose them;
 and he must be of a most disingenuous
 Mind indeed, who is not wrought
 upon by mild and friendly Advice.
 This is the Purport of St. Paul's Ad-
 vice to the Romans: *Be not overcome
 of Evil; but overcome Evil with Good;
 for in so doing, thou shalt heap Coals of
 Fire on thy Enemy's Head*; that is, melt
 him into an affectionate Temper, and
 purge off all the Dross of Ill-will to-
 wards you; or at least enjoy the Satis-
 faction

faction of reflecting that you have done your Part, and what your heavenly Father required at your Hands. This Passion of Anger was placed in us by our all gracious Creator, for a very wise and good Purpose, *viz.* to prevent Evils to which we would otherwise be exposed, and therefore most certainly we may know that we have exerted it in an undue Degree, when instead of preventing thereby the Evil we were threatened with, we have either provoked the Party to increase it, or have ourselves produced greater in the Course we have taken: And this indeed, is a Case not uncommon. Men frequently change Sides; and he who was at first the injured Person, becomes himself at last the most injurious and most culpable. The Way to come at a right Knowledge how we ought to be affected

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S E R M O N XVI. 241

on every such Occasion, is to remove Self out of the Way, and consider impartiality, what would be the Sentiments of any indifferent Person concerning it, and then it would soon appear to us in quite a different Light to what it did, when we were under the Influence of Self-love, or Self-esteem. For these are Mediums of such a peculiar Nature, that they magnify even the small Indiscretions and Inadvertencies of others into heinous Offences, and at the same Time make our own real Faults imperceptible, or not worth mentioning. But Persons who are no otherwise concerned, than as the Merits of the Case require, see Things just as they are, and having no Biass on their Minds either Way, judge and determine as Truth leads them. Their Re-
sentments therefore upon the Affair,
will

will be a good Rule to direct us by ; and if we see they pass it by without much Notice or Regard, so, we may well presume, it will be most prudent for us to do. But if by their Conduct, we perceive ourselves to have been most in Fault, it will best become us rather to correct ourselves, than be out of Humour with others. Or, if our Adversary have been really to blame, we shall be more sufficiently revenged, if we leave him to the Reflections of his own Mind, and the Treatment which he will meet with from others. For there is implanted in the Minds of all of us, such a Power or Faculty, as will make us discern, whether we will or not, what is right and what wrong. And however by Passion or Self-love, and that natural Partiality which every Man bears to his own Cause, we may, for a Time,

a Time, hinder that Faculty or Power from exerting itself, yet it will at Length prevail against all Opposition, and the injurious Man will be forced to condemn and punish himself in his own Thoughts. And what will still be an additional Grievance and Vexation to him, he will see the Verdict of his own Mind confirmed by the Sentiments and Behaviour of all around him; so that however the Party he has injured may have laid aside all Resentment against him, yet that very Generosity will upon Reflection, sting him to the Heart; nor will he have any Satisfaction, or Ease in his Mind, till he himself has made Amends for the Wrong he has done.

Some have vainly thought that we are obliged to annihilate or extirpate our Passions; but that is a great Mistake.

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They were not made so considerable a Part of our Constitution for such a Purpose; neither can it be imagined that God should require of us, what every Man will find by Experience to be impossible. All that we have to do is to direct and regulate them by the Principles of Reason and Religion; and the Disorders we meet with in the World are owing to a Want of such Regulation and Direction. Even this Passion of Anger, which Men generally look upon in so frightful a View, and regard as the Source of so many Evils and Calamities, ariseth nevertheless from a very good Principle, from a Concern we naturally have for Justice and Equity, and a Displeasure, as naturally arising in us from Injustice or Cruelty. This appears plainly from the Manner in which all Men are touched by seeing
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a Representation even of a feigned Story of Baseness and Villany, properly worked up to move their Passions. We are told by *Plutarch*, that *Alexander*, the *Pheræan* Tyrant, who had never wept over any of those Murders he had himself caused among his own Citizens, wept when he saw a Tragedy but acted in the Theatre, being angry at the Injustice and Cruelty the Innocent met with : Nor could he stay till the Play was ended, but abruptly left the Theatre, being ashamed, as he owned, that he, who had never pitied those he had murdered, should weep at the Sufferings of imaginary Persons. The Reason of this was, his Attention was caught here ; and he more observed the cruel and unjust Usage he beheld worthy Persons labouring under, than ever he had those of the *Pheræans* ; and more impartially,

tially, being no otherwise concerned in them, then as a common Spectator. Upon this Occasion, therefore, this Passion of Anger, or Resentment of Injury, implanted in human Nature, overcame his Habits of Cruelty, broke through his acquired Petrification or Hardness of Heart, and would shew that it could not be wholly eradicated or perverted.

It is therefore according to Nature to be affected with this Passion ; it puts us continually upon that Guard, which the Dangers and Evils perpetually assailing us in this World, have made necessary. I say necessary ; for let us suppose that Men had naturally no such Indignation at Injury, Injustice, or Cruelty placed in them ; what would then be the Consequence ? We feelingly perceive in ourselves a strong Compassion
towards

towards Persons in Distress. How exceedingly painful and difficult then would it be to doom a Criminal to Death, if we had not that other Passion to counterballance this natural Weakness? Would it not often quite prevent Punishments and Executions proper and necessary to deter others from committing the like Crimes? And, the Wicked being encouraged thereby to persist in their destructive Measures, destroy the Peace, and endanger the very Being of Society. And hence it is, that the Apostle has left us this Precept; *Be ye angry and sin not*; which manifestly supposes that there are very justifiable Causes of Anger, and that we may very justly and wisely put in Execution its Dictates, if we do but regulate and direct them by the Rules of Reason and Religion. We may be angry with and punish Offenders,

fenders, and yet not sin in doing so. This is by no Means to be called Malice; it is a just Indignation against Vice and Wickedness! it is one of the common Bonds, by which Society is held together; and it is, indeed, no other than a rational and Christian Fellow-feeling, which each Individual ought to have for the Rest of his Society, as well as for himself.

But herewithal we are to observe, that the Intention of God's placing this Passion in us, is to prevent and put a Stop to Injury or Injustice; and therefore that is the End which we too must always take Care to have in View. To gratify a base or malicious Temper, however just the Provocation, is never to be the Purpose aimed at. Under all our Anger and Resentment we must still retain

retain a Christian Charity for the Persons who injure us, and at the same Time, if it can be, reform the Offender as well as put a Stop to his injurious Designs against us. We must endeavour to convince him of the wrong and unworthy Method of acting he is gotten into; and so by bringing over his Understanding to a true Sense of Virtue and Religion, make him regard his former Injustice with Aversion. Thus shall we do, what our blessed Saviour commands; *Love our Enemies, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us*: for hereby we shall testify the truest Love and Affection towards them, confer upon them the greatest Blessing in our Power, and do them that Good and Service, which will redound to their Ease here, and their eternal Happiness hereafter. And herein is seen the Wisdom

dom and Goodness of God in giving us even this Passion, which from Mens Abuse of it, hath been reckoned a great Imperfection of our Nature. It serves, we see, when duly exerted and kept within proper Bounds, to many good and excellent Purposes; and the Abuse of a Thing is never accounted a just Reason to depreciate its Worth. God Almighty sometimes representeth himself under the Influence of this Passion, which, though he therein speaks after the Manner of Men, he would most certainly have not have done, if Anger had been a Thing evil in itself; and we may as well charge our Reason with being so, since that most excellent Faculty, whereby we are distinguished from all the Rest of the visible Creation, has been as much abused by Mankind, as this, or any other of our Passions; and that
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it may be very often from the same Cause, I mean their proceeding in both too rashly and precipitately. Thus in Matters of Reasoning, how many Errors have been given into and embraced by Mens Eagerness in receiving a Conclusion, before they have well weighed and considered the Premises from which it was pretended to be drawn! As it seemed serviceable to some particular Purpose they had in View, or favoured other Notions they were fond of, the Prejudice they had for it upon those Accounts quickly gained it a Reception; and its being subservient to their favourite Schemes or Opinions, made an Enquiry into its Grounds and Foundation to be thought tedious, irksome, and unnecessary. And so it is with Respect to this Passion of Anger. Men suffer themselves to be entirely possessed
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by it, before they have duly considered whether they have sufficient Cause for it; and then never think of pursuing the Ends for which it was designed by our Creator, but only to sooth their own fretful and malicious Tempers. It will require, indeed, some Care to have this constant Command over ourselves. Nay, we have so long, it may be, indulged and used ourselves to it, that perhaps it is now very difficult to recover our Power over it. But let us consider we are Creatures endowed with Reason; and why, think we, was that noble Faculty given us, but to regulate our Passions and appoint them their proper Bounds and Limits? We should call to Mind, that we are Christians, and consequently are under a most indispensable Obligation to act upon all Emergencies according to the Principles of right Reason and Religion.

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This last, viz. Religion, has confined it within the strictest Bounds, so far as concerns ourselves only. We must not only refrain from excessive Anger, but be always ready to forgive our offending Brother, as we ever hope to have Pardon ourselves at God's Hand. Nay, we are to pray to him for Pardon upon no other Terms, than *as we forgive those who trespass against us*. This, indeed, was the Opinion of some wise Men, before the Light of the Gospel appeared, as being agreeable, they thought, to natural Equity; and hence it is, that we find this remarkable Passage in the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, Chap. xxviii. 1—4. “He that revengeth shall find
 “Vengeance from the Lord, and he
 “will surely keep his Sins in Remem-
 “brance. Forgive thy Neighbour the
 “Hurt that he hath done unto thee, so
 VOL. II. M “shall

“ shall thy Sins also be forgiven thee,
“ when thou prayest. One Man beareth
“ hatred against another; and doth he
“ seek Pardon from the Lord? He
“ sheweth no Mercy to a Man, who is
“ like himself, and doth he ask For-
“ giveness of his own Sins?” Thus
could the wise Son of *Syrach*, who was
a *Jew*, express himself. Let not us
then, who are Christians, suffer ourselves
to be out-done by one of so imperfect a
Religion. It will be an Honour to us,
if we get the Mastery over ourselves;
nay, a greater than that which attends
Conquerors, and Men the most eminent
for Exploits in War. For this we have
the Word of *Solomon*, the wisest amongst
the Sons of Men, under the Influence
of God’s Divine Spirit; *He that is slow
to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and
he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that tak-*
eth

eth a City. And as this is a Declaration of God himself, so we may depend upon it, that if we will practice what he thus recommends, our Reward will be proportionable in the other World. Nay, by such a truly noble and divine Spirit, we shall qualify ourselves for those blessed Regions ; where there is nothing but Love, Peace, and Unity among the glorious Inhabitants, and uninterrupted Joy and Happiness flowing from them. That all of us may be qualified for those blissful Seats, God, of his infinite Mercy, grant us his Grace and Assistance, for *Jesus Christ* his Sake, our gracious Lord and Saviour ; to whom, with thee, O Father, and the blessed Spirit, the eternal Trinity in the ever blessed and undivided Unity, be ascribed, as is most justly due, throughout all Churches of the Saints, all Love, Honour, and
Obedience,

256 S E R M O N XVII.

Obedience, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiving, both now, and throughout each succeeding Period of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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